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AUTHOR Brophy, Jere
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ABSTRACT

Despite scholarly disagreement about the nature and purposes of social studies education, the most widely adopted elementary social studies textbook series tend to be remarkably uniform, consisting of compendia of facts organized within the expanding communities curriculum structure. Content selection and explication tend to be guided primarily by cultural literacy concerns. Texts feature parades of facts rather than networks of information gathered around an idea. Skills are taught largely in isolation from one another with little attention to knowledge content, and values are approached primarily through inculcation rather than through critical thinking and decision making. The textbook series that dominate the market share these and other similarities, so that in effect they constitute a de facto national curriculum in elementary social studies. This report presents a detailed analysis of a representative sample of these curricula: Silver Burdett & Ginn's elementary social studies series, 1988 edition. The study, a qualitative analysis, was guided by a set of framing questions that called for an examination of the goals and intended outcomes, the content selection and representation choices, the coherence of content explication in the student text, the suggestions made to the teacher about questions to ask the students, the kinds of classroom discourse that should occur, the nature of the activities and assignments provided with the test or recommended to the teacher, the purposes and nature of the evaluation methods supplied or recommended, and the nature and extent of the rationales and other explanatory material in the teacher's manual. A list of 24 references is included. (Author/DB)

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Elementary Subjects Center
Series No. 17

THE DE FACTO NATIONAL CURRICULUM IN ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES: CRITIQUE OF A REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLE

Jere Brophy

Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects

Institute for Research on Teaching
College of Education
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Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects

The Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects was awarded to Michigan State University in 1987 after a nationwide competition. Funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, the Elementary Subjects Center is a major project housed in the Institute for Research on Teaching (IRT). The program focuses on conceptual understanding, higher order thinking, and problem solving in elementary school teaching of mathematics, science, social studies, literature, and the arts. Center researchers are identifying exemplary curriculum, instruction, and evaluation practices in the teaching of these school subjects; studying these practices to build new hypotheses about how the effectiveness of elementary schools can be improved; testing these hypotheses through school-based research; and making specific recommendations for the improvement of school policies, instructional materials, assessment procedures, and teaching practices. Research questions include, What content should be taught when teaching for conceptual understanding and higher level learning? How do teachers concentrate their teaching to use their limited resources best? and In what ways is good teaching subject matter-specific?

The work is designed to unfold in three phases, beginning with literature review and interview studies designed to elicit and synthesize the points of view of various stakeholders (representatives of the underlying academic disciplines, intellectual leaders and organizations concerned with curriculum and instruction in school subjects, classroom teachers, state- and district-level policymakers) concerning ideal curriculum, instruction, and evaluation practices in these five content areas at the elementary level. Phase II involves interview and observation methods designed to describe current practice, and in particular, best practice as observed in the classrooms of teachers believed to be outstanding. Phase II also involves analysis of curricula (both widely used curriculum series and distinctive curricula developed with special emphasis on conceptual understanding and higher order applications), as another approach to gathering information about current practices. In Phase III, test models of ideal practice will be developed based on what has been learned and synthesized from the first two phases.

The findings of Center research are published by the IRT in the Elementary Subjects Center Series. Information about the Center is included in the IRT Communication Quarterly (a newsletter for practitioners) and in lists and catalogs of IRT publications. For more information, to receive a list or catalog, or to be placed on the IRT mailing list to receive the newsletter, please write to the Editor, Institute for Research on Teaching, 252 Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1034.

Co-directors:	Jere E. Brophy and Penelope L. Peterson
Senior Consultant:	Andrew C. Porter
Senior Researchers:	Patricia Cianciolo, Donald Freeman, Magdalene Lampert, Wanda May, Richard Prawat, Ralph Putnam, Cheryl Rosaen, Kathleen Roth, Suzanne Wilson
Editor:	Sandra Gross
Assistant Editor:	Elizabeth V. Elliott

Abstract

Despite scholarly disagreement about the nature and purposes of social education, the most widely adopted elementary social studies series tend to be remarkably uniform, consisting of compendia of facts organized within the expanding communities curriculum structure. Content selection and explication tend to be guided primarily by cultural literacy concerns, so that texts feature parades of facts rather than networks of information organized around powerful ideas. Skills are taught largely in isolation from one another and from the knowledge content, and values are approached primarily through inculcation rather than through critical thinking and decision making. The series that dominate the market share these and many other similarities as well, so that in effect they constitute a de facto national curriculum in elementary social studies. This report presents a detailed analysis of a representative example of these curricula: The 1988 edition of Silver Burdett & Ginn's elementary social studies series. It is not a mere content survey but a qualitative analysis guided by a set of framing questions that call for examination of the goals and intended outcomes, the content selection and representation choices, the coherence of content explication in the student text, the suggestions made to the teacher about questions to ask the students and about the kinds of classroom discourse that should occur, the nature of the activities and assignments that are provided with the text or recommended to the teacher, the purposes and nature of the evaluation methods supplied or recommended, and the nature and extent of the rationales and other explanatory material in the teacher's manual.

THE DE FACTO NATIONAL CURRICULUM IN ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES: CRITIQUE OF A REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLE

Jere Brophy[1]

The Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects is engaged in research and development on elementary-level teaching of mathematics, science, social studies, literature, and the arts, with particular emphasis on the teaching of these subjects for understanding and higher order applications of their content. Phase I of this work was devoted to literature review and surveys of expert opinion concerning (a) what content to emphasize in each subject, how to teach it, and how to assess student learning, and (b) how to conceptualize and assess students' abilities to think critically about the content and apply it within problem-solving and decision-making contexts (see Brophy, 1988, or Brophy, 1990, for a synthesis of the scholarly literature on these issues as they apply to elementary social studies teaching).

Phase II studies are designed to describe current practice and include analyses of state- and district-level policies and curriculum guides, analyses of currently available curriculum materials (including this report), and analyses of enacted curricula as observed in the classrooms of exemplary teachers. Phase III of the work will be devoted to improvement-oriented studies, in which ideas developed in earlier phases will be used as the basis for interventions designed to improve the quality of elementary-grade subject-matter teaching.

The analyses of commercially available curriculum materials that are being done as part of our Phase II work have been guided by a common set of framing questions used in each subject area. The framing questions have been designed

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[1]Jere Brophy, professor of teacher education at Michigan State University, is co-director of the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects.

to produce comprehensive and detailed analyses that consider not just the content of the student text but the larger curriculum that would be enacted if the teacher not only used the text and any provided ancillary materials (worksheets, tests) but also followed the manual's suggestions for lesson development and follow-up activities and assignments. Thus, the framing questions call for analysis of the goals and intended outcomes of curricula, their content selection and representation choices, the coherence of content explication in the student text, the suggestions made to the teacher about questions to ask the students and about the kinds of classroom discourse that should occur, the nature of the activities and assignments provided with the text or recommended to the teacher, the purposes and nature of the evaluation methods supplied or recommended, and the nature and extent of the rationales and other explanatory material in the teacher's manual.

Recent Critiques of Published Textbook Series

The curriculum series that publishers offer for adoption by schools have been subjected to a great deal of criticism recently. Much of this criticism, whether addressed broadly to all published curricula or focused more specifically on social studies series, has emphasized certain generic problems that appear to have developed in response to basic economic and political factors that affect the textbook publication industry. Tyson-Bernstein (1987) described the student texts as flashy in appearance but limited in value as learning resources for students. She identified the following generic problems: (1) the texts attempt to cover more topics than can be treated respectfully within the page limits; (2) yet they treat even important topics superficially, so that readers would have to already know a great deal about the topic in order to make sense of the material; (3) the writing is dry and wooden,

consisting mostly of simple declarative sentences all about the same length, with few adjectives or vignettes to enliven the text and few examples or counterexamples to give roundness to ideas, as well as too many paragraphs that are simply unclear because the material is too compressed and elliptical; (4) authors frequently do not provide readers with a context that would make facts meaningful for them; (5) information about minorities and women is often conspicuously tacked on rather than integrated into the rest of the content, and (6) excessive space is allocated to pictures and graphics that are unrelated to the text. Woodward (1987) concurred that textbooks tend to be too long on breadth and short on depth, with truncated and confusing coverage of many topics that leaves students unable to provide coherent reports of typical passages. He also found the texts to be cluttered with many photographs that serve no instructional purpose because they are either not sufficiently related to the content in the first place or not accompanied by enough explanation to create the level of understanding needed to make the photo effective as an illustration of key ideas.

Scholars studying factors influencing reading comprehension have identified various structural aspects of content organization in texts which, along with coherence in the selection and explication of the content itself, affect the degree to which a text is considerate or friendly to its readers. After synthesizing this literature, Dreher and Singer (1989) identified eight such features: (1) text organization (content is organized around key ideas and embedded within chronological order, cause/effect, problem/solution, comparison/contrast, or other logical structures rather than merely listed); (2) signalling (of sequences and subparts of the presentation); (3) discourse consistency; (4) cohesion (elements that relate sentences or paragraphs to one another); (5) explication (stating things directly rather than requiring readers

to infer them; linking content to previously presented knowledge; orienting students to central ideas or purposes; clarifying new ideas with examples or analogies; highlighting and defining new terms); (6) conceptual density (not introducing too many new ideas too quickly; first introducing an idea, then clarifying it, and then giving examples before going on to the next idea); (7) metadiscourse (talking directly to readers to convey the author's attitude or point of view or to direct the readers to do something specific such as answer a question); (8) and instructional devices (table of contents, glossary, index, graphic overviews, inserted questions, diagrams, summaries, review questions, application problems; also spacing, indentation, boxes, and other formating).

Dreher and Singer (1989) noted that most current texts are more difficult for students to learn from than they need to be because they do not make enough use of these text friendly features. Other scholars who have focused more specifically on social studies texts have identified additional frames or schemas frequently used to organize the content in such texts (Alvermann, 1987; Armbruster & Anderson, 1984; Hoge & Crump, 1988). Armbruster and Anderson (1984), for example, have shown that psychological explanations of events described in history texts often are embedded within a "goal frame" that has four slots: goal, plan, action, and outcome. The goal is the desired state sought by the group; the plan is their strategy for attaining the goal; the action is the behavior taken in response to the plan; and the outcome is the consequence of this action. Armbruster and Anderson suggested that students who are made aware of this goal frame should be able to read with better comprehension and to take more organized notes about historical events to which the frame is applicable (accounts of voyages of discovery, for example). However, they and the other scholars cited have criticized social studies texts for deficiencies

in reader friendliness due to their failure to employ such text-structuring devices consistently and to alert readers to them when they are employed.

Tyson-Bernstein (1987) attributed the generic problems with texts that have been noted by various critics to forces exerted on publishers by the policies of the large adoption states and school districts and the demands of teachers. She noted that one reason for the overemphasis on breadth relative to depth of coverage is that publishers are under constant pressure to cover topics of particular interest in certain locales. In their attempts to meet everyone's agenda they end up giving skimpy treatment to everything. Problems with clarity and coherence (not to mention zest and style) in the writing can be traced to imposition of readability formulas and the constant pressure for new editions every two years. Additional problems with the adoption process occur when texts get past the state or district level and are examined by teachers at the local level. Tyson-Bernstein claimed that such examination is often done hurriedly, so that cosmetic features (such as jazzy layouts, boldface vocabulary words, eye-catching buzz words such as "critical thinking skills" featured in large type in the front matter, conspicuous end-of-chapter summaries, colorful photos and illustrations) get more attention than they should, at the expense of careful analysis of the meaningfulness and coherence of the content. Also, teachers increasingly seem to be relying on manuals that spare them the need to make lesson plans and on curricula that include labor-saving extras such as workbooks, test packs, black line masters, posters, and resource books. Another recent factor is accountability: Teachers tend to favor series that they think will help them to help their students meet state-imposed testing criteria.

Analyses of textbooks and curriculum series in social studies have produced different conclusions at different times. Authors comparing developments

from the 1950s through the 1970s typically reached optimistic conclusions, noting such improvements as more and better graphics; better coverage of minorities, women, and everyday life; more accurate treatment of social science content and inclusion of more social science concepts and generalizations; more frequent and forthright treatment of value issues (although still within a general tendency to gloss over controversial or sensitive topics); inclusion of primary source material and tabular and graphic data along with narrative text; and suggestions for a broader range of learning activities (Fetsko, 1979; Kaltsounis, 1987; Patrick & Hawke, 1982; Wiley, 1977). More recently, however, such celebrations of progress have been supplanted by a spate of highly critical analyses of social studies texts and curriculum series that reinforce and elaborate on the generic criticisms voiced by Tyson-Bernstein and by Woodward.

Criticisms of History Texts

Many of these analyses focused on history texts, which have been criticized from at least four perspectives. Sewall (1987) has argued that history texts tend to be dull and choppy reading not only for the reasons outlined above but also because they feature a bland social science approach to topic coverage that focuses on general trends, rather than the stories of individuals and their exploits. Sewall contended that much of what makes history interesting and thought provoking is the opportunity to experience it as engaging storytelling rather than as dry analysis. Thus, he recommended that students be exposed to less of the latter and more of engaging narratives that personalize and concretize history around focal individuals whose personalities and exploits are delineated in colorful detail. He argued that this narrative approach would not only make history more interesting and easier to learn and remember for students, but also would provide more natural opportunities for

exposing students to controversial aspects of topics and to original sources and historical fiction as supplements to textbook treatments.

Other critiques of history texts also focus on their limitations as learning resources for students, although they recommend less drastic cures than wholesale replacement of an expository approach with a narrative approach. Beck and McKeown (1988) argued that in order to promote student understanding, history texts must be high in coherence--the extent to which the sequence of ideas or events makes sense and the relationships among them are made apparent. They argued that, given history's narrative nature, historical accounts need to be built around causal chains indicating that events have causes and consequences, including people's reactions to them. To learn history with understanding, students need to learn not only the elements in a chain, but also how these elements are related--why a certain action caused some event and why that event lead to subsequent events. Clarity about content goals is needed to avoid addressing too much breadth in not enough depth. Content needs to be selected in a principled way, guided by ideas about what students should gain from studying a topic. Failure to do this leads to three problems commonly observed in current history texts: (1) lack of evidence that clear content goals were used to guide text writing with an eye toward what students were supposed to learn from the instruction (so that the texts read as chronicles of miscellaneous facts rather than as narratives built around key themes), (2) unrealistic assumptions about students' prior knowledge (so that key elements needed to understand a sequence are merely alluded to rather than explained sufficiently), and (3) inadequate explanations that fail to clarify connections between actions and events (i.e., failure to spell out causal relationships). Beck and McKeown analyzed sections from several history texts, identifying sources of incoherence and suggesting remedies. More recently, Beck, McKeown,

and Gromoll (1989) have elaborated on these analyses and extended them to include geography texts. Ironically, their suggested remedies involve adding more of the social science analysis and style of writing to which Sewall (1987) objected.

Graves, Slater, Roen et al. (1988) have suggested that both the interest value and the comprehensibility of textbooks can be improved significantly simply by employing principles taught to professional writers. Graves et al. asked pairs of writing experts with different backgrounds to revise two 400-word passages from eleventh-grade history texts. Revision teams included a pair of composition teachers, a pair of text linguists, and an editor and a writer who worked for Time-Life books. Each pair was asked to work together and use whatever knowledge they had to make the text passages more comprehensible. The original version and the three revisions were then used as the texts in learning experiments with groups of high school students. Test scores revealed that students who read the Time-Life version recalled more than students who read the original or either of the other versions. Furthermore, editors from the Christian Science Monitor and the American Educator chose the Time-Life revision as the most effective one, and a member of the editorial board of USA Today praised that version lavishly and described it as far superior to the other versions.

Graves et al. (1988) examined the revisions and interviewed the writers in order to identify the strategies they used. Both the composition teachers and the text linguists reported that they had focused on clarifying the content by highlighting main ideas, adding cohesive ties within the text, providing background knowledge that would help students relate the new information to their prior knowledge, and deleting irrelevant information. In contrast, the Time-Life revisers focused on making the content more interesting and dramatic

by adding vivid anecdotes and details that were focused more around people than events. They also substituted strong, vivid verbs and added colloquialisms and metaphors. Whereas the other two revisions were about the same length as the original, the Time-Life revision increased passage length by over 80 percent, mostly due to the added anecdotes.

In interpreting their findings, Graves et al. (1988) suggested that even though the Time-Life revisions were longer than the others, they were easier to remember because they were written in more engaging prose that featured fewer passive sentences and abstract words but more memorable images and colorful picture words. Yet, they were organized around main themes and were explicit about logical and causal relationships, so that they told a coherent story rather than overwhelming readers with facts.

The Graves et al. (1988) findings aroused not only interest but suspicion among researchers concerned with the relationships between text features and student comprehension, because they appeared to contradict earlier findings indicating that students' ability to learn and remember text is dependent more on the degree to which the text is structured around main ideas than on the vividness of its writing style. Furthermore, anecdotes of the kind inserted by the Time-Life revisers would be expected to enhance understanding if they were elaborations of the main ideas but to detract from such understanding if they were irrelevant to the main ideas, and analysis of the Time-Life revision suggested that its personalized anecdotes tended to emphasize ideas that were less important than the main ideas. These and other concerns led two teams of investigators (Britton, Van Dusen, Gulgoz, & Glynn, 1989 and Duffy, Higgins, Mehlenbacher, et al., 1989) to replicate the Graves et al. (1988) study in research that used the same four text selections (the original and the three revisions) but introduced some differences in sampling and research design. In

contradiction to the findings of Graves et al. (1988), but in support of the typical findings from text comprehension studies, each of the two teams of investigators who conducted replication studies found that it was the revision produced by the composition teachers, and not the Time-Life revision, that yielded the most student learning and retention.

Duffy et al. (1989) identified some of the factors that might explain these discrepant findings. First, the test used by Graves et al. (1988) was less than ideal because it tested students' memory for the specifics included in the original version (many of which were arbitrarily inserted details irrelevant to the main ideas), rather than students' retention of the main ideas. This had the effect of penalizing revisers (such as the composition teachers) who focused on increasing coherence by stressing and elaborating main ideas and eliminating irrelevant material. Second, in the original study, data collection concerning each of the three versions was done at different locations using different student populations, and data collection and scoring was done under the supervision of the revisers themselves. These procedures raised questions of comparability of samples and procedures and of the possibility of experimenter bias influencing the findings. The two replication studies eliminated these problems using improved designs. Third, Graves et al. (1988) simply assumed that students would find the Time-Life version more interesting than the other versions; they did not test this assumption by asking the students about their perceptions.

The Duffy et al. (1989) study, designed to avoid these and other problems in the original study, produced findings that strongly support the argument that student learning and retention of important information is ensured primarily by structuring the text coherently around key ideas rather than by striving to make the writing colorful and to include interesting illustrations

and anecdotes. First, test-score data indicated that the revision by the composition teachers was significantly more effective, and the revision by the Time-Life writers was significantly less effective, than the other two versions. Second, the student rating data indicated that the students perceived the composition teachers' version to be both more enjoyable to read and easier to understand than all three of the other versions, which were not significantly different from one another. Thus, even though the elaborations in the Time-Life version were designed to entertain the reader rather than to help the reader use or apply main ideas, the data favored the version revised by the composition teachers not only on students' learning and retention test scores but also on their ratings of enjoyment and ease of understanding. Apparently, the Graves et al. (1988) findings favoring the Time-Life version were misleading due to use of an inappropriate test, uncontrolled variation in sampling or procedures, experimenter bias effects, or some combination of these factors.

Analyzing the three sets of revisions, Duffy et al. (1989) noted that although they strove to improve clarity and coherence, the text linguists resembled the Time-Life writers in emphasizing middle- and lower-level propositions in their revisions (even though they thought they had emphasized top-level main ideas), whereas the composition teachers emphasized top-level propositions. In fact, both the Time-Life revisers and the linguists significantly decreased the proportion of top-level propositions from the proportion included in the original version, whereas the composition teachers increased it. Thus, the composition teachers revised by including more advance organizers and other structuring information and by focusing the content more clearly and exclusively around important ideas, whereas the other revisers focused more on clarifying and elaborating middle- and lower-level content.

These data indicate that emphasizing the structure of a text facilitates recall of its top-level propositions, and that including a great deal of detail that is irrelevant to these top-level propositions reduces students' learning of them. Thus, despite the face validity that arguments based on improving writing style such as those advanced by Sewall (1987) and by Graves et al. (1988) carry for many adults, the student data from the studies by Britton et al. (1989) and by Duffy et al. (1989) support the arguments advanced by Beck and McKeown (1988) and others suggesting that the value of textbooks as learning resources for students will be improved primarily by restructuring them into networks of connected information that coheres around important ideas.

A fourth criticism of history texts is that they typically fail to introduce students to the discipline of history or the work of historians (Elliott & Woodward, 1988). Most of the content is presented as nonproblematic fact, with little or no indication of where the information came from, whose point of view it represents, or what alternative interpretations have been proposed. Furthermore, there usually is little or no information about how historians work or about history as an interpretive discipline, as well as little or no provision for students to examine primary materials and develop their own interpretations or to articulate and defend positions on controversial issues.

Criticisms of Elementary Social Studies Series

In addition to these concerns voiced specifically about history texts, there are several commonly voiced criticisms of the generic aspects of elementary social studies series. One of these is that not enough content is included in the texts for the primary grades, and that much of what is included does not need to be taught. Ravitch (1987), for example, dismissed much of this content

as "tot sociology," viewing it as mostly a collection of boring information that students have no interest in and do not need to learn anyway (because they develop most of this knowledge through normal experiences outside of school). Similarly, Larkins, Hawkins, and Gilmore (1987) argued that much of the K-3 curriculum is "hopelessly noninformative" because children already know that families contain parents and children, that people live in houses, wear clothes, and eat food, and so on. Elaborating, they identified much of the content of texts at these grade levels as needlessly redundant (children already possess the knowledge), superfluous (children will acquire it without instruction), text inappropriate (the information may be useful but should be taught more directly than through reading about it in texts), sanitized (purged of any opportunity to give offense), biased (presented from a single viewpoint when multiple viewpoints are appropriate), or aimless (not clearly related to important social education goals or unrelated to any other content in the text). Both Ravitch (1987) and Larkins et al. (1987) blamed the problem in large part on the expanding communities organizational structure and called for replacing this content with story books, biographies, and greater emphasis on history and geography rather than on content drawn from the social sciences. Also, both agreed in noting that even though these primary texts contain not enough rather than too much content, the content that is there suffers from the same problems of mentioning without explaining sufficiently, poor coherence, and clutter that have been observed in the history and geography texts used in Grades 4-6.

A third set of criticisms of elementary social studies series focuses on their skills components. Summarizing findings by Elliott, Nagel, and Woodward (1985) and others, Woodward (1987) identified three primary problems in the way that skills are handled in these series. First, more is promised in the front

matter and the scope and sequence charts than is actually delivered in the lessons--the merest mention of a skill is often treated as sufficient for it to be cited in the charts, when inspection of the lesson reveals that it does not develop the skill at all. Second, the skills given the most emphasis in recent social studies series tend to be those that are most easily measured, such as map and globe skills. These tend to be repeated unnecessarily throughout the series, whereas inadequate attention is given to information gathering, report writing, critical thinking, decision making, value analysis, and other higher order application skills. Third, despite publishers' claims to have integrated knowledge and skills teaching, the skills content is typically separated from the knowledge content rather than integrated with it.

Ideas from these critiques of texts in general and of social studies series in particular were kept in mind in developing the critique presented in this report, although the critique itself was guided by the framing questions developed in collaboration with other Center researchers (these questions are embedded in the critique to follow). The remainder of this report contains the critique itself and a discussion that includes comparison of my observations with those of others who have examined the same curriculum series.

Curriculum Selection and Analysis Procedures

Across the subject areas, the Center's plans for analyzing commercially available curriculum materials call for (a) analyzing one or two of the most widely adopted curriculum series (with the expectation, based on consensus among recent scholarly reviewers of such materials, that most of them will be ill-suited to teaching the subject for understanding and higher order applications of its content), and (b) analyzing other curriculum series and supplemental materials, whether widely adopted or not, that are distinctive because they

have been developed with an emphasis on teaching for understanding and higher order applications. In some subject areas (particularly mathematics and science) there are not only supplemental materials but also complete K-6 curriculum series that are distinctive in this regard. This does not appear to be the case in social studies, however, in which both scholarly critiques and our own examination of currently popular curriculum series suggest that these series are all similar to one another in adopting a citizenship transmission, cultural literacy approach that offers a primarily factual coverage of topics sequenced within the expanding communities organizational framework that starts with the child and moves gradually outward in space and backward in time. Thus kindergarten focuses on the self in familiar contexts, Grade 1 on families, Grade 2 on neighborhoods, Grade 3 on communities, Grade 4 on the state and local geographic region, Grade 5 on U.S. history and geography, and Grade 6 on world history and geography. The emphasis is on communicating cultural literacy facts, developing various skills (using maps, globes, charts, and graphs, conducting research, organizing information, and writing reports), and inculcating citizenship values and dispositions. Typically, there is not much stress on structuring the knowledge content around powerful ideas drawn from the disciplines, teaching the skills as strategies to be used in the process of applying the knowledge content, thinking critically about value-laden aspects of the content, or applying such critical thinking within decision-making contexts.

The Silver Burdett & Ginn (SBG) curriculum series (1988 edition) was selected for analysis because it is representative of these widely adopted series and is one of the most popular. Sewall (1987) estimated that its fifth-grade American history and geography text controlled 70% of the market share in the mid-1980s. Thus, although this report presents a detailed critique of SBG

specifically, most of its comments about the generic aspects of SBG apply equally well to its competitors and amount to a critique of the current de facto national curriculum, or at least of the curriculum materials supplied to teachers.

The process used to develop the critique was as follows. First, I met periodically over several months with other Center staff members engaged in curriculum materials critique in order to develop the framing questions by generating successive versions, trying them out on samples of curriculum materials, and then revising them. Once the framing questions were finalized, I then used them to guide development of the critique, proceeding in three stages. First, I carefully read through and studied the entire student text for each grade level (1-6), ignoring material that was in the teacher's manual but not in the student text. This allowed me to assess the degree to which each text could stand alone as a source of input and as a learning resource for students. After taking detailed notes on the content of the student texts, I then examined the explanatory material, scope and sequence charts, and other information contained in the manuals that was supposed to orient the teacher to the curriculum. Thus, after first putting myself in the place of a student using the student text, I then put myself in the place of a teacher using the curriculum series. Finally, I went back through the series again, this time looking not only at the student text but at the worksheets, tests, unit introduction and summary material, suggested lesson development questions, and suggested activities and assignments, so as to learn about the nature and likely impact of the enacted curriculum that would result if the teacher not only used all of the supplied materials but followed all of the suggestions. Once again I took detailed notes, searching for features found at all grade levels but focusing

on Grades 1, 2, and 5 for examples to cite in response to the framing questions.

Grades 2 and 5, and especially the unit on rules and laws in Grade 2 and the unit on the English colonies, the American Revolution, and the U.S. Constitution in Grade 5, were given especially close attention because the social education scholars and elementary school teachers that were identified as experts and interviewed for Study 3 of Phase I of the Center's research agenda had been asked to assess the SBG curriculum series, with emphasis on these grade levels and units. Thus, findings from these interviews (summarized in Prawat, Brophy, & McMahon, 1990) provided additional points for comparison with my observations developed in this critique. The views expressed by these interviewed experts will be incorporated into the discussion that follows the presentation of the critique itself.

Critique of the 1988 Silver Burdett & Ginn Series

Following the corresponding sections of our set of framing questions, the critique is organized into eight sections: (a) goals, (b) content selection, (c) content organization and sequencing, (d) content explication in the text, (e) teacher-student relationships and classroom discourse, (f) activities and assignments, (g) assessment and evaluation, and (h) directions to the teacher. There are several subquestions within each of these major sections.

A. GOALS

1. Are selective, clear, specific goals stated in terms of student outcomes? Are any important goals omitted?

There is no clear statement of goals as such. The material at the front of the teacher's edition mentions understanding and appreciation of the content, application (of skills to content), and extension or reinforcement of

skills. This introductory information is limited to just a few sentences and focused on curriculum features rather than on goals or rationales.

At some, but not all, grade levels, there is a single program rationale page at the back of the book, prior to a program content outline. It makes the following claims:

> Built on a solid factual foundation. Developed to help students understand themselves and the world around them and to instill in them the knowledge and skills necessary for responsible citizenship. Built on solid factual foundation, using the expanding environments design.
>
> Instills knowledge and skills. Reflects the belief that students need to know, appreciate, and do. A grasp of basic facts is essential in gaining understanding of social studies, so a wealth of material is provided. Each lesson begins with a Directed Study Question to make students aware of the main idea. Lesson check-ups, chapter and unit reviews, and chapter tests ensure students' understanding of text material. Opportunities to develop language, reading, higher level thinking, and social studies skills are provided through exercises and activities.
>
> Encourages active learning. Involves the students in doing by working with photos, maps, charts, graphs, tables, and time lines as a vital part of the learning process. Students build models, conduct interviews, hold debates, and take part in a variety of other activities. In short, students are active participants.
>
> Fosters responsible citizenship. Enables students to appreciate themselves, the world around them, and their roles as citizens of the United States. Students learn to understand some important links between them and their families, communities, states, regions, nation, and world. In doing so, they develop an appreciation of historic and geographic factors

and economic and political relationships that have shaped their world. Moreover, students are given specific suggestions for assuming a responsible role--in capacities commensurate with age and ability--in their community, state, region, nation, and world. The program helps them to function meaningfully in the present and prepares them for their future role as good citizens.

This is the entire rationale statement, and it does not even appear at each grade level. Like the material in the front of the manual, it reads more as hype focusing on features of the program seen as positive rather than as a serious statement of rationale and goals. If taken at face value, however, it can be seen as identifying selective, if not clear and specific, goals. It focuses on citizen education rather than on disciplinary knowledge or personal development, and it does so with an emphasis on factual knowledge and values and dispositions (developed via inculcation rather than via value analysis and decision making).

The primary intended outcome is responsible citizenship. This is undefined, but it appears to mean knowing and doing one's duty as a citizen. Within this context, secondary intended outcomes include developing in students knowledge and appreciation of themselves, the world around them, and the historic, geographic, economic, and political factors that have shaped it. There is little mention of goals that would be associated with content drawn from psychology (and to a lesser extent, anthropology or sociology) or with values analysis or decision making.

2. Do goals include fostering conceptual understanding and higher order applications of content?

The term "understanding" is used frequently, often in tandem with the term "appreciation." Nothing is said about conceptual understanding of integrated

networks of information, however, and inspection of the actual curriculum indicates that "understanding" means the ability to repeat factual explanations, to define or recognize examples of concepts, or to execute skills correctly.

The situation with higher order applications is similar to that with conceptual understanding. The terms "applications," "higher level thinking," and "critical thinking" appear in the program description, and the review questions and exercises include both "critical thinking" questions and "application" activities. However, the "critical thinking" questions are mostly broad questions about student preferences for one situation or alternative over another, rather than questions calling for critical assessment of the validity of claims or the advisability of courses of action. Furthermore, nothing is said to the teacher about establishing critical or reflective discourse surrounding these questions (such as by asking students not only to take a position on an issue but to defend it by citing relevant evidence).

"Applications" tend to call for mere exercise of skills rather than life applications of content. Many of these exercises are labeled "Using Skills." The rhetoric surrounding skills speaks of developing or reinforcing such skills and applying them to the content but not using them to apply the content. The introductory material includes a page on thinking skills in social studies that defines and contrasts inquiry skills with critical thinking skills and claims that the best way to develop such skills is to provide students with opportunities to engage in them. This page appears to be an afterthought. It is never referred to in the curriculum itself, and there is nothing to suggest that it was used as a basis for curriculum development. In summary, although there is lip service, neither the goals statements nor the curriculum itself place much emphasis on conceptual understanding and higher order applications of content. The emphasis is on inculcation of knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

3. To what extent does attainment of knowledge goals imply learning networks of knowledge structured around key ideas in addition to the learning of separate facts, concepts, and principles or generalizations?

The curriculum is divided into units/chapters consisting of related lessons each structured around key ideas that are usually stressed both in the introduction or theme statements and in the review material and check-up questions. However, the identified key ideas often are either relatively low-level facts or concept definitions or else overly high-level generalizations rather than the mid-level principles or generalizations that optimally anchor networks of knowledge organized for life applications. For example, a lesson on shelter is built around the key idea that people in different places live in many different kinds of houses. This is a much less powerful key idea than the one that should have been developed--that people in different places live in different kinds of houses in part because of the climate and natural resources of the region. Thus, there are key ideas but not real networks, and many of the designated key ideas are trite or inert.

4. What are the relationships between and among conceptual (propositional), procedural, and conditional knowledge goals?

For the most part, knowledge and skills are treated separately rather than being integrated. There is reference to three types of skills: social studies skills, language arts skills, and critical thinking skills. The social studies skills are tool skills involving reading maps, interpreting graphs, etc. These are taught to some extent (particularly in the first unit or two of each year). The language arts skills and critical thinking skills are not taught but merely exercised through activities that supposedly extend or reinforce them. Linkages between the skills and the content currently being taught in the unit vary from natural and appropriate to artificial and forced, but in any case, skills are mostly exercised as ends in themselves rather than taught as strategies for

applying social studies content to real life problem solving or decision making.

4a. To what extent do the knowledge goals address the strategic and metacognitive aspects of processing the knowledge for meaning, organizing it for remembering, and accessing it for application?

Neither the goals statements nor the curriculum itself address the strategic and metacognitive aspects of processing knowledge for meaning, organizing it for remembering, or accessing it for application. Some of the "language arts" skills exercises call for students to distinguish main idea from details, summarize, outline, etc., but these are treated as isolated skills exercises and not taught as strategies for learning the content in the texts.

4b. What attitude and dispositional goals are included?

Three sets of attitude or dispositional goals are mentioned. First is the disposition to act as a responsible citizen. This is emphasized on the rationale page but is neither defined there nor mentioned in connection with curriculum content or activities. The authors apparently kept this goal in mind in their writing of the text (which consistently attempts to inculcate citizenship values and dispositions), as well as in their designing of some of the suggested activities. However, this connection typically is not made clear to the teacher.

Next is appreciation, presumably of how and why the social world works as it does. Again, what the authors may have meant by appreciation is not made clear in the rationale page, and this goal is never mentioned in the curriculum. If positive attitudes and other primarily affective (i.e., not cognitive) aspects are counted as appreciation goals, then much of the values inculcation component of the curriculum could be seen as fostering appreciation (of the local community, the state, the nation, and the American Way generally).

Finally, there is student interest in the content. Several features of the program (including its "interactive illustrations") are described as building student interest, and each lesson begins with an ostensibly motivational activity. Thus, the goal of engendering student interest in the content was consistently taken seriously and used as a basis for curriculum development.

4c. Are cooperative learning goals part of the curriculum?

Nothing is said about cooperative learning goals.

4d. As a set are the goals appropriate to students' learning needs?

As a set, the goals would be seen as appropriate only by those who both (a) wish to emphasize citizen education over personal development or disciplinary knowledge, and (b) favor an inculcation approach to citizen education over a more critical values analysis or decision making approach.

Even among those who favor the fostering responsible citizenship approach adopted by the authors, however, many would fault its execution for placing too much emphasis on relatively inert and poorly integrated facts and skills, but not enough emphasis on key understandings or life applications.

5. Do the stated goals clearly drive the curriculum (content, activities, assignments, evaluation)? Or does it appear that the goals are just lists of attractive features being claimed for the curriculum or post facto rationalizations for decisions made on some other basis?

Except for the consistent attempt to inculcate values and beliefs supporting responsible citizenship and to include ways to generate student interest, there is little evidence that the stated goals really drove curriculum development. The content of the text appears to have been driven more by cultural literacy concerns than anything else, and the exercises and activities appear to have been driven in large part by the skills lists emphasized in state curriculum guides. Many of these exercises and activities are unrelated to the

knowledge content, and most of the rest fail to extend it in useful ways. In effect, they are language arts skills exercises rather than social education applications.

B. CONTENT SELECTION

1. Given the goals of the curriculum, is the selection of the content coherent and appropriate? Is there coherence across units and grade levels?

Given goals that emphasize facts and citizen education via inculcation, the content selection could be seen as <u>appropriate</u> (although limited in effectiveness by clutter and by poor development of key ideas). If one adopts a broader standpoint, however, the content can be criticized from a social science perspective for not being structured around powerful concepts and generalizations (elaborated using charts or other comparisons of examples); it can be criticized from a life applications perspective for failure to promote many such applications; and it can be criticized from a critical theory perspective for its biased selection and sanitized presentation of information.

The content can be seen as <u>coherent</u>, at least at a molar level, given the goals and the fact that there is a great deal of spiraling and repetition (to a fault) in Grades 1-3. However, major problems of coherence exist at a more molecular level due to failure to structure the content around key ideas that are developed in sufficient depth to promote understanding (See Question C1 below).

2. What is communicated about the nature of the discipline from which the school subject originated?

There is little hint of the academic disciplines underlying the content until about the fourth grade. Instead, there is only social studies as a school subject, which turns out to be a mixture of facts from history, geography, and what adults would recognize as rudimentary social science. Mixed in

with this are dollops of patriotism and vague happy talk (in the text) and of language arts and visual arts and crafts (in the activities) (see question D1a for examples of happy talk). Grades 4-6 offer geography and history, and thus at least superficially present discipline-based information. However, the geography is written at the travel brochure or "interesting facts about" level, and the history is written from a narrowly American rather than a global perspective and is biased in favor of developing an uncritically positive global pride in the nation rather than a more informed and balanced view.

2a. How does content selection represent the substance and nature of the discipline?

The history content is spotty. Most of the material is presented in the form of facts (or reputed facts), with relatively little explanation or even identification of major trends occurring over time. There is little sense of history as interpretation or of the processes that historians engage in to develop such interpretation, and little or no attention to the themes raised by critical theorists. Nor is there much use of original source material, despite claims to the contrary at the front of the teacher's manual.

There are several positive features to the historical content. First, although a chronological framework is used and the presentation is cluttered with a great many unnecessary facts and insertions, it does at least try to tell the story of the development of the United States as a nation and includes several themes that lend some coherence to individual chapters (growth of the nation as a world power, expansion of democracy to a broader range of citizens, etc.). Furthermore, it has good material on what everyday life was like in most of the periods covered, and it does a reasonably good job (in the text, if not in the inserts) of developing the main themes without getting lost in personalities,

battle sites and dates, or cultural literacy trivia. The writing is easy to follow and reasonably interesting--not exciting or romantic, but not bad either. Still, this is primarily a cultural literacy, chronicle-of-facts treatment of history with emphasis on inculcation of traditional American values, not the kind of critical historical interpretation that would be produced by practitioners of history as a discipline.

The geography sections are also mildly interesting and easy to read, and they are supported by outstanding maps, photos, and other graphics. Enough useful raw material is provided for good treatment of basic geographic principles by a teacher who was familiar with these key ideas, but the key ideas themselves usually are not spelled out either for teachers or for students. Furthermore, there is a general failure to pull together material relating to key ideas, such as through charts comparing and contrasting the different geographical regions covered and the examples given of different kinds of communities found within each type of region. The emphasis is on place geography rather than on human-environment relationships or human adaptation to geographical variation. Much of the geographical content is reminiscent of tourist brochures, but with a little more emphasis on natural resources and products and on things of special interest to children.

The social science material is mostly poor, again featuring some useful basic facts and concepts but minimal treatment of key principles and generalizations. Here again, comparative charts would help (such as a chart showing the functions and services handled by local vs. state vs. national governments or outlining the tasks that need to be done on farms both daily and at certain times during the year).

Much of the social science content relates to economics. Basic economic concepts (needs, wants) are introduced in the primary grades, and later

coverage includes such topics as depressions and recessions, cash crops, inflation, extension of markets, and interdependence. Unfortunately, however, there is no place in the series where key concepts and principles that form the basic network of economics content covered are pulled together and treated as a network.

Whenever alternatives to the U.S. economic system are covered, they tend to be criticized from the free enterprise capitalism point of view (especially the command economies of communist countries). Ironically, in view of the myth of the benign, happy world where everyone likes and helps one another that is nourished in the primary grades, selfish economic motives are often given as the reasons for war, imperialism, and related evils covered in the historical sections in Grades 4-6. These sections often give the impression that people would routinely engage in ruthless scrambles for riches if governments did not place limits on their excessive behaviors.

Sociology content is also introduced in the primary grades (especially the third-grade text on communities) and then integrated into later coverage of history and geography. There are several good sections relating to the economic and social aspects of sociology, but coverage of the political aspects tends to be distorted by the relatively narrow American rather than global purview adopted throughout the series. The latter factor also makes the series weak on anthropology coverage. American history and geography are not embedded within a global purview. Few cross-cultural examples are included in the primary grade material on families, neighborhoods, and communities, and the world geography covered in Grades 4 and 6 focuses on places more than on cultures. When it does cover cultures, it is respectful but relatively uninformative (students learn, for example, that many Moslems resented and

resisted forced westernization in countries where this occurred, but few specific examples are given to provide concrete details about what this meant).

The civics and government material is limited by its almost exclusive focus on the United States. Furthermore, although it includes a simplified version of the Constitution and several charts and graphs relating to the workings of the federal government, it never really provides coherent explanations of how the government functions. Again, what comes through is vague patriotism rather than more detailed and balanced information. Also, the civics material socializes but does not countersocialize (Engle & Ochoa, 1988). That is, it emphasizes the needs for rules, laws, and support for the government, but doesn't say much about dissent, protection of minority interests, or the notion that in a democracy power is supposed to flow up from the people rather than down from the government.

In general, then, historians, geographers, and social scientists looking for a great deal of content selected from and organized for presentation around structures currently emphasized in their disciplines will be disappointed with this series. They also will find very little about how practitioners in these disciplines operate. The degree to which this should be considered a problem depends on one's point of view. I believe that the emphasis on citizen education and interdisciplinary treatment of topics makes more sense for elementary-level social education than an attempt to teach history and the social sciences as disciplines would. However, I also believe that more information could have been conveyed about the underlying disciplines, and that the selection and presentation of information could have been more faithful to the disciplines from which it was drawn. (For more on representation of the disciplines, see C3 below).

2b. Is content selection faithful to the disciplines from which the content is drawn?

This question does not apply easily because the content is not intended to represent the underlying social science disciplines. The content presentation does differ in spirit from the underlying disciplines in that it treats most things as nonproblematic facts. It is also quite biased (via selection, if not outright distortion) in its eagerness to inculcate its version of patriotism. A related problem is the substitution of vague happy talk for more substantive content (products are described as things that we use rather than as manufactured items; communities are described as existing in part because "people want to live together"; and "places to have fun" are featured prominently in descriptions of urban features).

2c. What does the relationship among conceptual (propositional), conditional, and procedural knowledge communicate about the nature of the discipline?

Here again, it is difficult to apply this question to elementary social studies, both because it does not attempt to teach disciplines as such and because it doesn't have tight linkages between propositional knowledge and procedural knowledge. Skills connected with maps, graphs, and the like are treated effectively, although not in close integration with propositional knowledge. Because of the heavy emphasis on facts rather than concepts or generalizations, there is little application of the propositional knowledge, and thus little critical thinking or decision making.

3. To what extent were life applications used as a criterion for content selection and treatment? For example, is learning how the social world works and how it got to be that way emphasized?

Except for recreation-oriented preference questions ("Would you rather live in a small town or a big city?"), this curriculum is very weak on <u>life applications</u>. Weak (and often irrelevant) activities are a big part of this

problem, although even the text itself is so poor on explanations that students seldom are likely to develop knowledge or appreciation of how things work or how they got to be the way they are. Intended examples of generalizations often are not identified as such, and comparisons between examples that would relate them to the larger generalizations typically are not made. Processes are seldom described even at the level of their major steps, let alone explained more fully. In general, there isn't enough emphasis on understanding even to provide a basis for life applications, let alone follow-through in the form of activities calling for such applications.

4. What prior student knowledge is assumed? Are assumptions justified? Where appropriate, does the content selection address likely student misconceptions?

Although the suggested <u>activities</u> sometimes call for use of skills that have not been taught, the <u>text</u> presents few if any problems with prior student knowledge. This is seldom an issue in social studies because most material is neither hierarchical nor difficult to understand. The content included in this curriculum should be meaningful to the students, and it is presented with sufficient concreteness of language and examples to promote understanding (of the factual content emphasized). There does seem to be an overly large jump from a primarily picture-based curriculum requiring minimal reading to much lengthier text (both in the book and in the assignments) between second and third grade, although neither the reading level nor the nature of the content should present problems to typical students at any grade level. There are problems with the coherence of understanding that the curriculum is likely to develop, but these are not due to unjustified assumptions about prior student knowledge--instead, they are due to inadequate explanation of most topics treated (where the treatments feature mention of miscellaneous facts rather than detailed exposition of networks of information built around powerful concepts and generalizations).

Student misconceptions are mentioned only rarely, and then typically at the level of fact (e.g., it is not true that most of Africa is covered with thick jungle) rather than understanding and explanation.

5. Does content selection reflect consideration for student interests, attitudes, and dispositions to learn?

Content selection does consistently reflect consideration for students' interests. There are very good graphics, each lesson begins with a motivational starter, and many of the suggested questions concern students' opinions or prior experiences. The material is easy to read and the writing style is not exciting but not bad either. To the extent that the curriculum has problems in the area of motivating students to learn, it would be in the failure to put more emphasis on life applications of the content and the failure to include much critical thinking and decision making (in lieu of inculcation).

6. Are there any provisions for student diversity (culture, gender, race, ethnicity)?

Yes. First, instructional guidelines frequently suggest that teachers bring in local examples or relate the content to local issues or people. There is also a clear effort to include women and minorities, both in the text and in inserted short features on famous people, although these vary in their relevance and importance to the themes of units. In general, this issue is handled well in several respects, although the material can still be criticized as Eurocentric, sanitized, etc.

C. CONTENT ORGANIZATION AND SEQUENCING

1. Given the goals of the curriculum, is the organization of the content coherent and appropriate? Is there coherence across units and grade levels?

The content organization is appropriate in that it follows the expanding communities framework and moves from more basic, brief, and global treatment toward more advanced, elaborated, and differentiated treatment of particular

content domains (see C4 below for more about content organization and sequencing). Except for the chronological treatment of American history in fifth grade and the primarily geographical treatment of regions in fourth grade, the material is organized more by topic than by discipline. One could call it interdisciplinary treatment of topics, although it is perhaps better described as a factual or cultural literacy treatment that draws content and information from the social science disciplines but does not teach these disciplines as such.

In other respects, the content organization is less appropriate. There is not enough content in the early grades and too much in the later grades; skills are not well integrated with knowledge content; and many of the skills exercises and suggested activities are more appropriate for language arts curricula than for social studies curricula. The topics currently covered in Grades 1-3 could have been covered (even in more coherent and detailed fashion) in just the first two grades, leaving Grade 3 for other topics such as multicultural studies or studies of the local community, state, or region. Geography is overdone in Grades 4-6, in two ways: (1) There is a great deal of redundancy in the information presented, and (2) presentations are cluttered with too much isolated detail. The authors might have done better to devote all of Grade 4 to U.S. geography (combining the geographical regions approach currently used in Grade 4 with the parts of the country approach currently used in Grade 5, and including a focus on the local state, but omitting the coverage of geographical areas outside the United States that is currently included in Grade 4). This would make it possible to concentrate all of Grade 5 on U.S. history, allowing space for more coherent treatment of history without having to devote much of the second half of the year to U.S. geography.

People who were sufficiently knowledgeable about social studies curriculum sources and organizing schemes, if they conducted a careful analysis of the content developed within and across grade levels, could identify SBG's (generally appropriate) organization scheme. However, this organization would not be recognized as coherent by most students or even teachers. In addition to the problems mentioned in the previous paragraph, the organizational coherence of the SBG curriculum is minimized by failure to provide a clear rationale for or even explanation of the organizing frameworks within which the content has been embedded (see C4 below), as well as by a failure to make these organizing frameworks salient or to help readers use them as structuring devices when learning and remembering content. The texts do list and remind readers of key ideas for each individual lesson, but they provide practically no help in assisting readers to grasp the big picture by recognizing repeated organizational structures or themes that develop across units or grade levels. As a result, the curriculum comes off more as a parade of largely isolated facts than as a systematic treatment of related domains of knowledge.

2. To what extent is the content organized in networks of information structured so as to explicate key ideas, major themes, principles, or generalizations?

This is a major problem running throughout the curriculum. Although there is a general logic to the selection of topics and the coverage of major subcategories of information within parallel topics (see C4 below), and some key ideas are introduced at least at the level of concept definition, there is very little explication of themes, principles, or generalizations, let alone structuring of the content around such key ideas. As a result, students are likely to emerge from this curriculum with a great many facts about people and places (especially in the contemporary United States), but with little or no awareness of connections between those facts and the historical and geographic

themes and social science principles that could help them to understand why things are the way they are and how they got to be that way. Even the key ideas listed for lessons and units tend to be facts rather than principles, generalizations, or causal explanations.

3. What is communicated about the nature of the disciplines from which the school subject originates?

Very little is said about the disciplines as such. The fifth-grade text has brief material about historians and the various sources that they use to develop information. It is stated that the historian's obligation is to investigate events carefully and "tell as truthfully as possible" what happened, but there is no elaboration of the meaning or implications of this statement. The section implies that there is one true account of what happened, and the historian must work like a detective, using clues to figure out exactly what that true account is. Nothing is said explicitly about history as interpretation or about slanting accounts to favor certain groups or ideas. The latter notion is at least approached occasionally in the historical material (most notably in contrasting the British with the American rebel view of the events leading to the Revolution), but even here, nothing is said directly about the complexities facing the historian or about history as interpretive.

Essentially nothing is said about geography or the social sciences as disciplines. There is a great deal of coverage of geographical content and teaching of geographical skills (working with maps, globes, charts and graphs, etc.), and there are places where students are asked to conduct geographical or social science investigations (most notably in developing information about their own community), but nothing is said explicitly about how geographers or social scientists work or about disciplinary conventions to be followed in carrying out these activities.

Much of this is defensible on the ground that elementary social studies is a school subject different from the social science disciplines taught later. Still, it seems that the authors could have done more than they did to introduce students to basic ideas about the disciplines and about how historians, geographers, and social scientists work (at places in the curriculum where such content could be incorporated naturally).

3a. How does content organization represent the substance and nature of the disciplines?

Since this is primarily a citizen education/cultural literacy approach, the content is organized mostly by topic rather than by discipline, especially in the primary grades. Vestiges of disciplinary content organization can be seen in the chronological treatment of history in Grade 5 and in the focus on geographic regions in Grade 4. Also, the use of basic concepts or analysis categories drawn from the disciplines can be seen in the organization of topics at most grade levels (see C4 below). The emphasis is on presenting facts seen as important for American citizens to know, however, and not on conveying the substance and nature of the disciplines.

3b. Is content organization faithful to the disciplines from which the content is drawn? (See Question B2b above.)

3c. What does the relationship among conceptual (propositional), conditional, and procedural knowledge communicate about the nature of the disciplines?

As noted above, except for the brief section on historians as detectives seeking to construct the truth from clues, the curriculum does not attempt to convey anything at all about history, geography, or the social sciences as disciplines. About <u>social studies as a school subject</u>, the curriculum suggests a massive collection of ill-organized facts about history, geography, and the world (especially the United States) today. There is very little hint that the mass of facts included within the propositional knowledge components can be

organized and understood using key concepts, or that in addition to facts this propositional knowledge includes principles and generalizations that can help one to understand, explain, predict, or control the social world. Skills are taught largely in isolation from the propositional content, and usually are not taught or used as strategies for making sense of or applying that content. Because there are so few direct linkages between the propositional knowledge and the procedural knowledge taught in the curriculum, there necessarily is very little attention to conditional knowledge, let alone integration of such knowledge with propositional and procedural knowledge.

To an extent, this lack of integration of propositional knowledge with procedural and conditional knowledge is understandable as a reflection of the nature of social studies content. In contrast to basic skills subjects, social studies encompasses a great deal of propositional knowledge but only limited procedural knowledge, and there are many fewer direct linkages between the propositional knowledge and the procedural knowledge. Even within that context, however, the SBG curriculum is notable for its emphasis on facts to the exclusion of concepts, generalizations, and principles that would provide a basis for application of the propositional knowledge taught, as well as for its minimal efforts to couch the treatment within a context of application by consistently encouraging students to think critically or make decisions about what they are learning. Both the text itself and the vast majority of the recommended questions and activities focus on memorizing facts. For the rest, there are many personal preference questions and some prediction and other comprehension questions, but very few opportunities for critical thinking or decision making about the content considered within a life application context.

4. How is content sequenced, and what is the rationale for sequencing? What are the trade-offs of the chosen sequencing compared to other choices that might have been made?

The sequencing appears to be a hybrid of three basic approaches: (1) the expanding communities framework that begins with the child in the here and now and moves gradually outward in space and backward in time as it considers gradually larger human communities; (2) the spiral curriculum approach, in which basic ideas introduced at one grade level are revisited at deeper levels or in different aspects at subsequent grade levels; and (3) a gradual differentiation approach in which ideas introduced earlier in brief and global fashion are treated later in more detailed, elaborated, and differentiated ways.

Although couched within the rhetoric (and to some degree, the organizational framework) of the expanding communities structure, the curriculum actually focuses mostly around topics organized according to an interdisciplinary approach to universal human needs and experiences (in the primary grades) and a cultural literacy (for U.S. citizens) approach to history and geography (in the intermediate grades). Major topics covered are as follows.

Grade One: Families and their needs. Families, school, neighborhood, our country, food, clothes, shelter, workers. 170 pages, 10-30 words per page.

Grade Two: Communities and their needs. Communities, maps, the earth, needs and wants, rules and laws, communication and transportation, the first Americans, colonization and independence, national holidays. 202 pages, 20-80 words per page.

Grade Three: Our country's communities. Using maps, using social studies tools (graphs, diagrams, time lines), studying a community (using Wilmington, North Carolina as an example, following up by studying the local community), cities, smaller communities, farm products for our

communities (farming yesterday and today, types of farms, activities on farms), resources for our communities (oil, coal, food from the sea, conservation of natural resources), connecting our communities (transportation and communication modes and processes), citizenship (types of civil servants, local, state, and national laws and law making), our nation celebrates its past (national holidays). 296 pages, 100-200 words per page.

Grade Four: Geography of states and regions. Using maps and globes, learning from graphs, diagrams, and photographs, forest regions (Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico, the Soviet Union and the Amazon Basin), desert regions (deserts of the United States, the Mohave Desert, the Sahara and Atacama Deserts), plains regions (Illinois as an example of a central plains state, Maryland and Louisiana as examples of coastal plains states, China, Kenya, and Australia), mountain regions (Colorado, Tennessee, Yugoslavia and Switzerland), regions working together (interdependence and regional specialization, airplane manufacture in Seattle and steel manufacture in South Korea as examples), your state and you (studying your community, learning about the land and people). 392 pages, 100-300 words per page.

Grade Five: The United States yesterday and today. Learning about maps, learning about history, discovering a new world (Native Americans, exploration and discovery by Europeans, exploring the New World), building a new nation (the English colonies, the road to independence, a new republic, nationalism), the nation grows (westward expansion, Civil War and Reconstruction, the last frontier, an industrial nation), the United States in modern times (a world leader, an interdependent world). The United States: Land and people today (the New England states, the middle

Atlantic states, the southeast states, the south central states, the north central states, the mountain west states, the Pacific states), Mexico and Canada yesterday and today. 628 pages, 200-400 words per page.

Grade Six: The world yesterday and today. Knowledge that helps you learn (learning about maps and climate, how to find out), the beginnings of civilization (ancient civilization in Mesopotamia and Egypt, in Greece, in ancient Rome, and in India and China), western Europe (land and resources, the past, times of great change, today), the Soviet Union and eastern Europe (land and resources, the past, today), the Middle East and North Africa (nature and people, the past, today), Africa south of the Sahara (nature and people, the past, today), south Asia, east Asia, Australia and Oceanea (land and resources, the past, today), the Americas (land and peoples, the past, today). 630 pages, 200-400 words per page. [Note: alternate text choices for Grade 6 focus on either the eastern or the western hemisphere rather than the whole world.]

Even from this brief listing of major topics, several features of this curriculum can be seen. Typically, for example, the text begins with a unit on social studies tool skills, then moves to a unit on the level of human community reflected in the title (families, communities, the state and region, the country, the world), and then moves to units on various social studies topics analyzed at the level of the corresponding human community. Topics in the primary grades center on universal human needs and activities (food, clothing, shelter, communication, transportation, occupations, government, communities). Topics in the intermediate grades center around historical periods and geographical regions. Subtopics (except in history) typically center around typologies (types of communities, transportation modes, Indian tribes, farms) or geographic analysis categories (land forms, climate, natural resources,

products, people and culture, points of interest). Many topics are repeated across two or more grade levels (map, globe, and graph reading; holidays; early American history; basic notions about laws and government; basic notions about geographic regions and interdependence). Most aspects of the sequencing appear to make good sense, given what the authors were seeking to accomplish, although in places the spiraling approach appears to have created unnecessary redundancies.

5. If the content is spiraled, are strands treated in sufficient depth, and in a nonrepetitious manner?

Many of the strands are not treated in sufficient depth, although the problem is the authors' emphasis on facts to the exclusion of concepts, principles, and generalizations rather than the spiral organization of the curriculum. Some spiraling is probably appropriate and helpful, but much unnecessary repetition can be seen, especially in the geography component. In particular, much of the content on maps, globes, and graphs included in the early sections on social studies tool skills is repetitive, and so is much of the geographical material in Grades 4-6. As noted above, I would recommend eliminating the geography sections from Grade 5 (thus leaving more room for a fuller treatment of American history) and integrating them into the material on states and regions in Grade 4, meanwhile eliminating the material on other countries from grade four and integrating it into the material in Grade 6. The material on holidays in the final units of Grades 1 and 2 is also largely repetitive.

In general, difficulty levels of social studies content do not depend so much on the discipline from which it is drawn or even the specific topic addressed as they depend on the degree to which the aspects of the topic addressed are familiar vs. unfamiliar, concrete vs. abstract, and global vs. differentiated and elaborated. Consequently, a great many different sequential

organizations of topics might be appropriate. With the exception of some of the redundancy problems associated with the spiraling approach, the sequential organization used here appears to be as good as any.

D. CONTENT EXPLICATION IN THE TEXT

1. Is topic treatment appropriate?

As an ill-organized parade of facts, the content is not very appropriate except in readability level. It provides students with miscellaneous facts but does not equip them with much systematic knowledge about how and why the social world works as it does or with concepts and principles that they can apply to their lives outside of school. Furthermore, even the factual material is not structured in ways that will encourage students to learn it as organized networks of information.

1a. Is content presentation clear?

Clarity is often a problem because of the vague, global language used to cover even the most factual of content. In the early grades, the text is skimpy, laced with happy talk and euphemisms, and just plain vague. Students learn, for example, that different levels of government have leaders (president, governor, mayor) who work in special buildings and make laws "to keep us safe," but they don't learn much about what problems the various levels of government address or how they do so.

Much of the primary curriculum is happy talk--celebration of the benign, supportive world that we all supposedly live in. For example, first graders learn that we all live in families where family members love and help one another; rules help us; families are proud of their neighborhoods and work to keep them clean and safe; workers in factories work together. In general, themes of helping and togetherness pervade the first-grade text, in which

people have only positive motivations and spend a lot of time working together and helping others. "Keeping us safe" is another major theme--this is the function of rules, laws, protective clothing, etc. The photos suggest that everyone lives in bright and attractive surroundings, free of crowding, litter, danger, etc. These themes continue in Grade 2, where the text teaches that neighbors come together to help one another, and this makes the work more fun because everyone helps; cities are full of places to visit and have fun; governmental leaders work together to solve problems and make plans for our benefit; the Native Americans loved the land and knew how to use it wisely; all Americans help to make the United States a great country; and the United States is great because its people are great and we are proud to be Americans. The third-grade text extends these themes: People in small communities take pride in their town and its past; there are many dedicated people who do good for the environment and the animals; the ever-changing world gets better all the time and is full of people eager to make things better for all of us.

The texts for Grades 4-6 reveal sanitizing and avoidance of controversy, but at least they are no longer laced with happy talk and other empty generalities. Even here, though, the lack of structuring around key ideas makes it difficult for students to learn and retain the information as organized bodies of knowledge. Even material on isolated facts is often vague (too many pronouns in lieu of nouns, too many generalizations stated without elaboration of specifics or examples, not enough explanations of why things are the way they are).

1b. If content is simplified for young students, does it retain validity?

Most of the content is valid as far as it goes, although there is a consistent bias toward describing a benign, happy world while avoiding or sanitizing the treatment of controversial or negative material. The bias toward a

benign, happy world is especially noticeable in the texts for the first three grades and has been described above. The sanitizing and avoidance of controversy become increasingly noticeable in the later grades, when the texts begin to touch on potentially negative or controversial content. In Grade 3, for example, the material on conservation says nothing about fears and predictions of permanent loss of nonrenewable resources, nor does the coverage of communities say anything about poverty, crime, welfare, etc.

In Grade 4, coverage of Alaska and Hawaii hints at controversy over preservation vs. logging of forests, but doesn't really explain this in any detail. Coverage of Puerto Rico mentions problems associated with deforestation and economic hardships, but with emphasis on how the former problems are being solved through reforestation and the latter ones are being overcome through economic improvements, leaving Puerto Rico with a "bright future." Coverage of Brazil talks about how the government is building a highway through the Amazon and seeking to promote tourism, without mentioning concerns about deforestation or effects on the natives. Coverage of the Navajo alludes to past problems but emphasizes economic improvements and their "bright future." Coverage of Nevada stresses that people come there for vacations because of the open spaces and climate--nothing is said about gambling. Coverage of Chicago at least mentions (in one of the few if not the only places in the whole series where these problems are taken up) current problems of unemployment, overcrowded living conditions among the poor, and increasing crime, but again the emphasis is on how the mayor and the people are working hard to keep Chicago great.

The fifth-grade text notes that the Daughters of Liberty "made sure that the boycott on tea was a success," without spelling out what this meant in terms of violence and intimidation. More generally, once past brief mention of loyalists who opposed the war and others who simply didn't care, the coverage

of the American Revolution gives the impression that the colonies were mostly full of idealistic patriots. Little is said about the extent of acceptance of slavery or the limitations on citizenship rights. Later, the text notes that monopolists sometimes drove competitors out of business during the 19th century but doesn't spell out the violence and intimidation methods used, nor does it describe companies' activities designed to suppress union organization. The growth of restrictions on immigration is described without clarifying that many of these were based on racial and ethnic prejudices. Coverage of U.S. foreign policy emphasizes our "defense" of other parts of the world and is not as direct as it could be in talking about how the U.S. acquired land from Spain and Mexico, intervened frequently in Latin America, or suppressed the independence movement in the Philippines. Domestic coverage praises reformers for their reforms but says little about capitalistic excesses, environmental pillaging, or related practices that created the need for these reforms. Very little clear information is given about the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union, and the coverage of Viet Nam, Watergate, Nicaragua, and other recent controversies is almost comically vague in its attempts to skirt controversy.

In Grade 6, controversial and negative issues are not so much distorted as skirted. Most religions are mentioned but without description or comparison of their key beliefs. The Indian caste system is described without much emphasis on how it perpetuated oppression of the lower castes. Communism is described as doomed to failure, primarily due to its lack of individual economic incentives, but nothing is said about why it is attractive to third world revolutionaries. The following quote illustrates how negative material is avoided by shrouding coverage in vagueness: "In 1898 the United States went to war with Spain. The causes of the war had nothing to do with the Philippines. But war came to the

Philippines because it was a Spanish colony. After the war, the United States and Spain agreed that the Philippines would belong to the United States. It remained an American territory for about 50 years. The country became independent in 1946" (p. 507). This is the entire coverage of U.S. involvement in the Philippines.

Content is sometimes distorted through imposition of forced dichotomies or other structuring formulas (uniforms are worn either for protection or for identification of the person's job). This is an even bigger problem in the activities than in the text (see Question F3b below).

There are simplified and paraphrased versions of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution included in the fifth-grade text that not only seem valid as far as they go but probably are more effective for promoting understanding in elementary students than the original documents would be. There also are occasional simplifications (e.g., equating petroleum with oil) that are not technically correct but probably harmless.

1c. How successfully is the content explicated in relation to students' prior knowledge, experience, and interest? Are assumptions accurate?

This is one of the strengths of the series. Perhaps to a fault, it focuses on things likely to be familiar (in Grades 1-3) and interesting (in all grades) to elementary grade students. A few things (such as natural gas) are mentioned periodically without ever being explained, and the fact that the history and geography content is long on breadth but short on depth and structuring around key ideas means that many things are merely mentioned without being developed. However, the series does not suffer from frequent attempts to treat topics that are too abstract or otherwise difficult for children to follow.

1d. When appropriate, is there an emphasis on surfacing, challenging, and correcting student misconceptions?

With only rare exceptions (see B4 above), the series not only fails to mention common student misconceptions to the teacher or address them in the text, but actually reinforces childish naivete concerning such topics as the benign qualities of political leaders and of the world in general. The authors show no awareness of likely student misconceptions concerning such topics as the North Pole, grain elevators, barrel racing, and credit cards.

2. Is the content treated with sufficient depth to promote conceptual understanding of key ideas?

This is a major weakness of the series, which clearly opts for breadth over depth.

The content in Grades 1 and 2 is generally poor, lacking in clarity and detail. Many sections are actually confusing because the pictures show a great variety of examples (many of them atypical rather than prototypical), but the text does not develop key ideas or call for comparison and contrast. For example, students learn that there are many different kinds of shelter (including houseboats, trailers, mountain cabins, and houses raised on stilts), without learning much about why these different housing forms exist or why particular people choose them. The text never clearly pulls things together by stating that food, clothing, and shelter are basic needs, nor does it directly contrast needs with wants or manufacturing workers with service workers.

In general, the first-grade text is long on definitions and examples (often far-fetched), but short on explication of key ideas or connection of ideas via subsumption or comparison and contrast. Students learn that there are many different kinds of communities, homes, and clothing styles, but very little about why. They also learn that things are very different now from how they were in the pioneer days, but not much about how or why they are different. This pattern continues in Grade 2, in which there is good material about

the varieties and life-styles of different Indian tribes, but essentially no structuring around basic geographical and anthropological concepts that would give students some understanding of the reasons for the similarities and differences described.

In Grade 3, there is a case study of Wilmington, North Carolina that contains some good material but doesn't make clear to the students that it is meant as an example of how they can study their own community using such categories as geography, history, interesting places, and places to have fun. The chapter on cities confusingly begins with the example of Tenochtitlan, a city that no longer even exists as such and furthermore was a very unusual example of a city in many respects. The authors would have done better to introduce this section by elaborating on the notions of division of labor, specialization, and trade (which were barely mentioned) to help students understand how specialized occupations and cities got started and have proliferated since. The remaining examples of cities are better chosen, but the principles that they are supposed to exemplify get lost in the details presented about the cities themselves.

The chapter on smaller communities uses Hannibal, Missouri and Indio, California as examples, but never makes clear that they are intended as examples of larger concepts and principles. There is a section on oil drilling that is too vague to be very useful, as is a section on coal. Students learn that these are natural resources found in the United States and learn a little about how they are taken from the ground and transported, but they don't learn much about what they are or how their uses have evolved over time. The sections on levels of government give a few titles and place names but not much about the services that each level of government performs or the processes through which

it functions. Instead, there is a sea of details including American symbols, pictures of federal buildings, facts about various Presidents, and so on.

In Grade 4, the introduction to the unit on the plains regions is confusing in several respects. It fails to clearly identify the key characteristics of plains regions, giving the impression that certain characteristics are essential when they are not. For example, it suggests that large cities are located in the coastal plains but not in the central plains. The coverage of states within regions in this text keeps bringing up a great range of historical, economic, and other issues, so that the authors continually digress to give brief explanations of things mentioned in passing. Often these either are unnecessary or are too brief to do much good for students who are not already familiar with the term or event. This aggravates the already severe problem of brief mentioning that is inherent in topical geographic sections.

The content in Grades 5 and 6 is choppy, being long on miscellaneous details but short on coherent coverage of the big picture of important political, economic, or historical trends in Grade 5 or geographic relationships and interdependencies in Grade 6. There are a great many unexplained statements and loose ends. For example, the fifth-grade material on the New England colonies notes that the religious beliefs of the Church of England, the Pilgrims, and the separatists were key reasons for the colonists' behavior, but nothing is said about these beliefs. It is noted that the Mayflower contained people who were not among the Pilgrim group and thus were there for other reasons, but nothing is said about who these people were or why they were there. It says that Squanto had learned to speak English, but doesn't say how or from whom. It says that Maine was sold to the Massachusetts Bay colony in 1677, without explaining who owned it, who lived there, etc. It says that Thomas Hooker left Massachusetts because he did not approve of the way that the leaders treated

the colonists, but does not elaborate on what this meant. Similarly, the coverage of countries in the sixth grade is mostly tourist brochure coverage that provides a potpourri of facts without much structuring around concepts or explanation about why things are the way they are.

Not all sections suffer from major clarity and coherence problems. In the first-grade text, there is a nicely written and illustrated section on the development of peanut butter from plant cultivation to sales at the supermarket, and also a nicely written and illustrated section on manufacture of clothing long ago and today. The second-grade text has a well written and illustrated section tracing the manufacture of a map puzzle from raw materials to finished product. The third-grade text has a good section on social studies skills and another on farms (good because it gets into the functions and processes involved in farming, something that it does not do in discussing the other kinds of communities covered).

Along with a great many facts, the chapter on Alaska in the fourth-grade text contains some good explanatory material on Alaskan economics, especially the forestry industry. The concluding unit on interdependence is also good. It explains the interrelationships among natural resources, local economies, and transportation systems as they have developed over time, and it effectively uses recessions and depressions, the Boeing airplane plant, and the South Korean steel industry as examples to illustrate economic interdependence. The fifth-grade text has a good section on exploration of the New World. It makes clear the economic reasons for the voyages of exploration and uses Columbus effectively as a personal example. Subsequent material about explorers who followed Columbus is also effective, containing good information about the explorers individually and about what they were trying to accomplish and why, supported by time lines and maps. A later unit on the growth of the nation

during the 19th century is noteworthy because it is better organized around key ideas and less burdened with myriad details than the other history units. It also deals more directly and extensively with controversial and unpleasant episodes, provides good information about the lives of everyday people at different times and places during the period covered, and focuses more on key ideas and main trends than on personalities or cultural literacy trivia (details about different presidents, specific laws or Supreme Court decisions, dates of entry of each new state into the Union, and so on). Finally, this unit contains unusually frequent invitations to critical thinking by the students.

The sixth-grade chapter on ancient civilizations in Mesopotamia and Egypt is written in simple language but focuses on main ideas and seems likely to be interesting to sixth graders and to create appreciation for these ancient civilizations and their accomplishments. The accompanying illustrations are excellent. The next chapter on ancient Greece is similarly good. Finally, the chapter on western Europe during times of great change is effective, especially for introducing students to factors that led to conversion of European states and kingdoms into modern nations and for helping them to appreciate how the industrial revolution changed the world. Here again, the material is effective in part because it focuses on major trends and processes without getting lost in the details of wars, treaties, inventions, and so on.

3. Is the text structured around key ideas?

This is another major weakness. Often there are no key ideas (especially in the geography content), or the key ideas identified are relatively trite or vague. Where a structure does exist it often can be discerned only by carefully searching for it because examples get extended treatment to the point of becoming entities of their own (Indian tribes, countries or communities in

different geographic regions), without ever being compared with one another or related back to the concepts or principles that they are supposed to be exemplifying.

3a. Is there alignment between the themes/key ideas used to introduce the material, the content and organization of the main body of material, and the points focused on in summaries and review questions at the end?

Such alignment usually does exist, but its value is undercut by the fact that most of the identified key ideas are facts rather than concepts or generalizations. Furthermore, although the teacher's manual contains statements of unit themes and chapter objectives, the student text contains only the directed study question that begins each lesson as a content structuring device for students. Where the content is almost completely a parade of facts with little or no development of concepts or generalizations (as in the third-grade material on communities and the fourth- and sixth-grade material on geography), there is less alignment and the selection of points to include in summaries often seems arbitrary.

3b. Are text-structuring devices and formatting used to call attention to key ideas?

At least in form, if not in function, the curriculum contains a number of such structuring elements. Lessons begin with directed study questions; additional questions are occasionally inserted into the text; and vocabulary reviews, main ideas lists, and check-up questions appear at the ends of lessons. However, the effectiveness of these structuring devices is limited because (1) the content is usually a parade of facts rather than a network of information structured around key ideas, and (2) except for the directed study question, the structuring devices all come at the ends of lessons. The authors could have done more with advance organizers and more systematic use of inserted questions and headings and other outlining devices.

3c. Where relevant, are links between sections and units made explicit to students?

Such linkages are often made in the skills material, but not in the knowledge material. Despite the fact that a spiraling approach is used, much of the spiraling is really just repetition of the same few ideas rather than a systematic building on earlier established foundations. There are few if any cross-grade linkages, so that repeated treatments of the same general topics (construction of temporary shelters such as igloos or tepees during extended hunting expeditions, drilling for oil, extraction of information from maps and globes, fundamental economics concepts) not only do not build on one another but appear to have been written by different authors without even awareness of what was said about the topic elsewhere in the series. Much of the Grade 5 geography content simply reviews material covered in Grade 4.

4. Are effective representations (e.g., examples, analogies, diagrams, pictures, overheads, photos, maps) used to help students relate content to current knowledge and experience?

Because the content focuses on facts rather than on concepts or principles, it is difficult for students to relate it to anything else. Representations are generally effective, however, in providing students with concrete images of what the people and activities being discussed look like. The series is strong in its use of time lines, maps, pictures, and occasional diagrams, but weak in use of charts and related tools for comparing and contrasting cases or examples in order to promote conceptual understanding and extraction of generalizations or principles. Thus, students are likely to learn the individual facts taught but not to see much significance in these facts, to recognize connections among them, or to learn concepts and principles that they can access and apply to their lives outside of school.

4a. When appropriate, are concepts represented in multiple ways?

This is not as important an issue in social studies as it is in, for example, mathematics. The series does not so much represent concepts in multiple ways as use multiple examples (of Indian tribes, desert communities, etc.). However, it typically fails to get the most out of these examples because it fails to systematically compare and contrast them. It does use time lines and graphs as visual representations of material covered in the text, and it also occasionally calls for historical recreations or role plays in the suggested activities.

4b. Are representations likely to hold student interest or stimulate interest in the content?

The pictures and illustrations are of generally high quality throughout the series. Many of the pictures of life in particular cultures or communities are especially likely to draw student interest because they depict children or children's activities.

4c. Are representations likely to foster higher level thinking about the content?

Many of the pictures and other representations have this potential if exploited properly, but the caption questions and suggested lesson development questions are not helpful in this regard. Instead of asking questions that would require students to analyze the content of representations carefully, relate it to key ideas, or think critically about it, the questions typically address trite factual matters, students' personal experiences (have you ever visited a farm?), or even irrelevant issues.

4d. Do representations provide for individual differences?

Provision for individual differences occurs more in the suggested activities than in the content representations. Again, this issue is not as important for social studies as it is for some other school subjects.

5. When pictures, diagrams, photos, etc. are used, are they likely to promote understanding of key ideas, or have they been inserted for other reasons? Are they clear and helpful, or likely to be misleading or difficult to interpret?

Although photos and illustrations are one of the strengths of the series, they typically are not used in ways likely to promote understanding of key ideas. The caption questions in the student text typically focus on trivial or irrelevant details and thus are actually counterproductive. The questions suggested to the teacher for lesson development are usually better--especially the regular lesson development questions as opposed to those boxed off as "visual skills" questions, which often distract from key ideas by requiring students to draw and defend inferences from pictures concerning issues that have little or nothing to do with the lesson topic. Thus, although the series provides good raw material in the form of photos and illustrations, the accompanying questions typically do not promote understanding of key ideas and frequently would be counterproductive if used.

The series could supply (or at least call for use of) more artifacts, original source material, and children's literature as supplemental input. Also, some pictures and illustrations are too small, vague, or otherwise ambiguous to serve the functions assigned to them, especially in workbook pages and practice masters. The illustrations in the units on maps, globes, and social studies skills (graphs, tables, etc.) are almost all good, and there are good illustrations of such things as the steps in rice farming, the interstate highway system, and the steps in the production of peanut butter and of paper.

Many of the illustrations are clear, interesting, and otherwise effective as illustrations, but are open to criticism as content selections for the same reasons that much of the text can be criticized: They illustrate trivial or dubiously relevant aspects of the topic rather than main ideas; they portray a

sanitized, benign world; they focus on unusual or exotic examples rather than prototypical examples of concepts; or they are intended to represent questionable dichotomies or conceptual distinctions. Thus, the problems are not with the quality of the pictures or illustrations so much as with the reasons why they were selected and the ways they are used.

6. Are adjunct questions inserted before, during or after the text? If so, what are they designed to promote (memorizing of facts, recognition of key ideas, higher order thinking, diverse responses to materials, raising more questions, or applications)?

Each lesson begins with a directed study question; questions are occasionally embedded in the text; and check-up and review questions appear at the ends of lessons and units. The vast majority of these questions are of limited value because they do not focus on key ideas and instead call either for retrieval of facts or for expression of student preference or opinion. The latter are often labeled as critical thinking questions, although they typically are mere opinion or preference questions rather than genuine critical thinking questions that call for students to evaluate or articulate and defend a position on a policy issue.

The directed study questions are typically useful in at least identifying main themes (if not key ideas or generalizations) in the content, but the questions embedded in the text itself are too infrequent, seemingly random, and typically unrelated to key ideas to be of much help to students attempting to monitor their comprehension as they read. Finally, although the few end-of-unit review questions at least tend to focus on main themes (but again, not necessarily on key concepts or generalizations), the more frequent end-of-chapter check-up questions focus on miscellaneous facts. In general, then, the adjunct questions are not likely to be very helpful to students either in

guiding their reading as they approach the material for the first time or in helping them to monitor their comprehension and review systematically.

7. When skills are included, are they used to extend understanding of the content or just added on? To what extent is skills instruction embedded within holistic application opportunities rather than isolated as practice of individual skills?

It is clear that the skills curriculum was developed essentially separately from the knowledge curriculum. Three general types of skills are addressed, separately from both the knowledge content and from one another. Social studies tool skills (maps, globes, graphs, gathering and communicating or depicting information) are developed in a separate unit that appears at the beginning of each grade level (see Question A4). These units are generally very well done, notable for unusually good illustrations and nice scaffolding and development of skills across the grade levels (although with too much redundancy). Teachers are told that they can either teach these skills units separately or integrate the skills content with the knowledge content, but the other units practically never contain references back to the skills units that would facilitate integration for teachers eager to accomplish it. Thus, most teachers are likely to teach these skill units separately. Given that they are placed at the beginning of each year's curriculum, and given that they contain a good deal of redundancy and review, the likely result is a good deal of unnecessarily repetitive instruction across the grade levels in schools where this curriculum is used in Grades K-6.

The social studies tool skills developed in the introductory units are frequently reinforced in skills exercises included later in the other units, but the effectiveness of these skills exercises is reduced by two factors: (1) they tend to be isolated part-skills practice rather than capitalizations on naturally occurring opportunities to use the skills within the context of

whole-task applications, and (2) these skills exercises often are unrelated to the knowledge being taught at the time, except in the most trivial ways. Instead of using the skills as tools to apply the knowledge developed in a unit, the authors merely find some way to relate the skills exercise to the knowledge content. Sometimes the knowledge content itself even appears to have been distorted in order to create skills exercise opportunities. For example, there is a skills exercise built around an illustration of five steps in building log cabins, in which the last three steps are arbitrary rather than logically necessary, and in any case, do not correspond to what is shown in the illustration. It appears that the authors wanted to include an exercise on sequential ordering somewhere in the curriculum and arbitrarily chose this lesson on frontier life as the place to include it, with the results just described.

In addition to problems of this sort, there are frequent examples of failure to include skills that would have been natural tools for applying the content. In the most ironic of these examples, a lesson describing four different American Indian tribes that virtually cries out for a charting exercise comparing and contrasting their cultures and customs lacks this key component that would have promoted understanding, yet the skill emphasized in the exercise attached to the lesson is charting--applied to content having nothing to do with American Indians!

Critical thinking skills are not taught as such but presumably are developed through the "critical thinking" questions. However, as noted above, these questions typically call only for student expression of opinion or preference rather than for articulation and defense of positions on policy issues or other more genuinely critical thinking.

Language arts skills are also just exercised through "language arts tie-in" activities and various skill sheets rather than taught directly. Many of these have little or nothing to do with social education goals, so that in effect they constitute an invasion of the social education curriculum by the language arts curriculum. Even where there is a more genuine tie-in, the presumably integrated activities frequently distort or trivialize the social education aspects in order to accommodate the language arts aspects, thus further eroding the coherence and thrust of the social education curriculum. Instead of well chosen activities likely to be effective in developing student understanding of and ability to apply social education concepts and generalizations using language arts skills, the curriculum more typically calls for essentially language arts activities (pluralizing, identifying the main idea in a paragraph, etc.) which employ content that is related in a general way to the topic of the unit but that are lacking in social education value because they do not relate to key ideas or extend the material in some useful way.

There are also boxed "visual skills" questions that teachers are supposed to ask students to develop their abilities to interpret photos. Most of these are either unhelpful or actually counterproductive, because they focus on issues that have little or no relevance to the main themes of the chapter.

8. To what extent are skills taught as strategies, with emphasis not only on the skill itself but on developing relevant conditional knowledge (when and why the skill would be used) and on the metacognitive aspects of its strategic applications?

There is virtually no emphasis on teaching skills as strategies, except to a minor degree in connection with certain map and globe skills and life application skills such as making schedules. The language arts skills and critical thinking skills are not really taught at all (just exercised), and the social studies tool skills typically are not taught as strategies to be used in

particular situations. Further, the instructions to teachers about activities do not mention the need for helping students to be strategic and metacognitively aware in their selection and use of strategies for accomplishing the tasks built into the activities.

E. TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS AND CLASSROOM DISCOURSE

1. What are the purposes of the recommended forms of discourse?

   1a. To what extent is clarification and justification of ideas, critical and creative thinking, reflective thinking, or problem solving promoted through discourse?

   1b. To what extent do students get opportunities to explore/explain new concepts and defend their thinking during classroom discourse? What is the nature of those opportunities?

Discourse opportunities are limited because the manual promotes a reading-recitation-seatwork curriculum. The vast majority of the suggested questions focus on facts, and most of the rest focus on students' experiences, interests, or opinions. There is little evidence that the authors view discourse, let alone sustained, critical, reflective dialogue, as crucial to the development of understanding or higher order applications. Some questions call for thoughtful observation or a degree of critical thinking, but nothing is said to the teacher about asking students to justify their answers or about engaging them in discussion rather than serial recitation. Only a few questions (typically those placed at the ends of units) and a few activities (typically the ones labeled "thinking" activities, but only a minority of these) call for the kinds of higher order thinking mentioned above. A few suggested activities call for discussion, debate, research, or some form of problem solving.

2. What forms of teacher-student and student-student discourse are called for in the recommended activities, and by whom are they to be initiated? To what extent does the recommended discourse focus on a small number of topics, wide participation by many students, and questions calling for higher order processing of the content?

Again, the vast majority of the suggested discourse would be recitation over miscellaneous facts. There is little provision for sustained discussion of key ideas, and practically no provision for student-student discourse.

3. Who or what stands out as the authority for knowing? Is the text to be taken as the authoritative and complete curriculum or as a starting place or outline that the discourse is intended to elaborate and extend? Are student explanations/ideas and everyday examples elicited?

Given the content selection and mode of presentation, the text stands out as the authority for knowledge. Controversy is avoided, most material is presented as nonproblematic fact, and the questions focus on getting students to remember what is stated in the text rather than to respond critically to it. To the extent that values are addressed, the emphasis is on inculcation rather than values analysis.

4. Do recommended activities include opportunities for students to interact with one another (not just the teacher) in discussions, debates, cooperative learning activities, etc.?

Student-student interaction is mentioned only in a very few activities (debates, simulations). There is practically no mention of cooperative learning or small group activities. The emphasis is on whole-group lessons followed by individual seatwork.

F. ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS

1. As a set, do the activities and assignments provide students with a variety of opportunities for exploring and communicating their understanding of the content?

   1a. Is there an appropriate mixture of forms and cognitive, affective, and/or aesthetic levels of activities?

   1b. To what extent do they call for students to integrate ideas or engage in critical and creative thinking, problem solving, inquiry, decision making, or higher order applications (vs. recall of facts and definitions or busy work)?

At first glance, the activities component of the curriculum is impressive. Large projects are suggested at the beginnings of units, each lesson begins

with a motivation activity, workbook exercises and practice masters containing vocabulary and place geography exercises are provided, and there are many suggestions for "thinking" activities and other activities--more than any single teacher is likely to have time to use. The "thinking" activities include what-if questions, creative writing, interviewing, map making, analyzing information, sequencing, outlining, making charts, graphs, or tables, role playing, and career awareness activities. Many of them are presented as providing content area tie-ins to language arts, science, math, music, or art.

However, most of these suggested activities suffer from the same root problems that the content presentation and the suggested questions do: They focus on reproduction of miscellaneous facts rather than on concepts, generalizations, or applications. The worksheets and practice masters are mostly matching and fill-in-the-blank activities that provide for reinforcement but not extension or application of the content. Many of the "thinking" activities do not require much thinking at all, much less genuine critical thinking. There are no tie-ins to current events and relatively few invitations to apply content to life outside of school. Most of the activities labeled as tie-ins to other subject areas are not particularly useful extensions of lessons and do not have much social education value. Many suggested projects (especially those calling for artistic construction) would be quite time consuming and yet not be of much use in furthering students' understanding of or ability to apply key ideas.

Thus, although there is a mixture of forms and cognitive, affective, and aesthetic (appreciative) types of activities, it is not a particularly appropriate or effective mixture. Too many of the activities amount to little more than busy work or engage students in tasks that have little or nothing to do with the social education goals that the curriculum is ostensibly pursuing, and

not enough activities call for them to integrate ideas or engage in critical thinking, problem solving, inquiry, or decision making.

2. As a set, do the activities and assignments amount to a sensible program of appropriately scaffolded progress toward stated goals?

This could be said of the social studies tool skills component of the program. Students should emerge from it with a good functional understanding of and ability to use maps, globes, charts, graphs, and related methods for representing or displaying social science data. Otherwise, however, there is little evidence (even within units, let alone across the curriculum as a whole) that coherent sets of activities were included because they were seen as parts of a systematic program for moving students toward clear goals. Instead, the curriculum offers a potpourri of activity suggestions that vary in apparent social education value and even in relevance to the main ideas developed in a lesson or unit. Few of the skills activities are sufficiently well integrated with lesson content to provide for meaningful extension or application of that content (instead, they provided isolated skills practice). Many of the "thinking" activities are good ones, but they do not cohere as systematic sets, let alone as a sensible program of appropriately scaffolded progress toward stated goals.

3. What are examples of particularly good activities and assignments, and what makes them good (relevant to accomplishment of major goals, interesting to students, foster higher level thinking, feasible and cost effective, likely to promote integration and life application of key ideas, etc.)?

A first-grade lesson on school helpers calls for inviting a school helper to come to the class, bringing tools used on the job, to talk about the job (including what aspects are good about it and what are not), answer questions, and tell students how they can be helpful. The class would follow this up later by preparing a thank-you card and taking it to the school helper. This

combination of activities would appear to be useful because it not only allows students to learn something about what one of the school helpers does on the job but personalizes the information via the class visit, includes attention to relevant affective and dispositional aspects (e.g., building a sense of identification with and responsibility for contributing to the welfare of the school), and includes language arts activities in a way that naturally and usefully extends the lesson (writing the thank-you note).

An early activity used to introduce students to maps calls for them to make a simplified map of the classroom by drawing in map key symbols for the clock, bookshelf, waste basket, door, table, and teacher's desk in appropriate places. This concrete experience in actually constructing a map of an already familiar and observable environment should be very useful for helping students to develop understanding of maps as two-dimensional schematic representations of three-dimensional places.

A lesson on neighborhoods calls for the teacher to lead the class in a walk around the neighborhood, pointing out and discussing examples of neighborhood features described in the text. Again, this should be effective in providing personalized and concrete meaning to the content being studied.

A first-grade lesson on the Pilgrims calls for having students look at an illustration showing Indians helping the Pilgrims to plant crops and to fish, and then write a story about it. The teacher is to help by providing a list of words that might be needed for these stories and suggesting that the students give each character in the illustration a name. This activity would be useful because it would cause students to process input in an active and personalized way, formulate their thoughts, and communicate them in writing. It is noteworthy as one of the few activities in the curriculum for the primary grades that calls for writing beyond a word or two, and also one of the few that includes

some suggestions to the teacher about how to scaffold the activity for the students.

A first-grade lesson on working and occupations includes the suggestion that students interview a family member or acquaintance who works in order to find out details about what the person does and at least one good thing and one less good thing about the job. Besides serving as an introduction to interviewing as a method for data collection, this activity provides a personalized way for students to learn about particular occupations, as well as a natural way to involve family members in substantive yet affectively positive interactions with the child in connection with schooling. For similar reasons, a second-grade activity calling for students to interview family members about a community law that they obey and why they obey it is also useful.

A second-grade activity calls for extending a lesson on the federal government by doing research and making presentations to the class on topics such as national parks or the postal service, to underscore the fact that the government not only makes laws but provides services. Such extension is badly needed, and if properly scaffolded by the teacher this activity could be useful not only in promoting students' understanding but in helping them to learn about doing research and about organizing and communicating their findings to others.

A fifth-grade activity calls for students to locate England and the colonies on a map, use the scale to determine the distances involved, speculate about how England and the colonies communicated, and discuss the difficulties that can arise when people cannot communicate easily. Intended as part of the introduction to a unit on the English colonies and the events leading up to the American Revolution, this activity would be useful in helping students to place the events that would be learned and sensitizing them to factors such as the

state of development of transportation and communication at the time and the implications of this concerning communication between England and the colonies. Comparison with today's instant communications and presidential hotlines would have been a useful extension of this discussion, but this was not mentioned in the manual.

Another fifth-grade activity calls for having the students imagine that they are Native Americans watching the Jamestown settlers clearing the woods and building the settlement, then having them write down their thoughts and feelings. This activity is useful for concretizing and personalizing the idea that certain elements of Old World culture were entirely foreign to New World inhabitants, and vice versa. A similar later activity calls for students to pretend to be Jamestown settlers and write a series of journal entries for the years 1607 through 1619, describing their experiences and feelings about them.

Another activity calls for discussing with students the advantages and disadvantages of the Jamestown site, then having the students identify and sketch an ideal area for a settlement at the time. This activity calls for critical thinking about and application of ideas about what the Jamestown settlers were hoping to accomplish and the implications of this concerning desirable vs. undesirable geographical and environmental features of a settlement site.

A "thinking" activity that also successfully ties in art calls for students to develop a poster or pamphlet advertising colonial Pennsylvania to Europeans, bearing in mind that the poster or pamphlet should function as propaganda designed to motivate action (immigration) rather than as a well balanced and accurate source of information. This activity not only promotes understanding of lesson content but calls for a great deal of critical thinking and allows for integration of ideas and skills developed elsewhere in the

curriculum (concerning propaganda techniques, construction of persuasive arguments, and so on).

Another activity calls for students to write an essay explaining how the colonial plantations differed from today's large farms. With proper structuring and scaffolding by the teacher, this activity could be useful in extending understanding and promoting critical thinking about how the nature and economics of farming has changed over time in response to inventions.

One of the suggested unit projects calls for having students start a Hall of Fame of Great Americans by choosing and reporting on persons who contributed to the development of the United States when it was a new and growing nation. This is the kind of integrative research and writing assignment that allows students to get into material in some depth, to exercise some choice (of what person to write about), and to read interesting biographical material. The teacher would need to provide appropriate scaffolding in the form of guidelines about the nature and numbers of sources to consult, about taking notes, and about outlining and editing successive drafts.

One of the few debating activities in the curriculum calls for having the students debate the following issue, basing arguments on information from the text and outside reference materials: Resolved, that the colonists were right to disobey the laws imposed on them by Great Britain. This is a good topic for debate, and the debate itself would be a useful deepening and extension of the lesson on the American Revolution. It might be better done within small groups, however, and some follow-up debriefing analysis (preferably including a vote) would also be useful.

Another activity calls for students to read a book or encyclopedia account of Paul Revere's ride and compare it with the more romanticized, less accurate version in Longfellow's poem. Besides being a natural and useful incorporation

of poetry, this could be a worthwhile activity for helping students to understand some of the ways in which historiography and fiction differ in goals, processes, and products.

One of the few activities calling for use of primary source material involves providing students with copies of Thomas Paine's "immortal words" and discussing the meaning with them, including asking about what effects they think such writing had on the patriot cause. This appears to be a useful exposure to key primary source, and the discussion, if handled well, would help students to appreciate the stirring effect that writers like Paine can have on people in the midst of conflict. Linkages to recent and current writings would be useful, too, although the manual does not mention this.

One of the few activities calling for charting would involve having students fill out a partially begun chart listing problems that existed under the Articles of Confederation, noting for each problem which article of the Constitution addresses it and briefly explaining how it was fixed. This activity should promote understanding of unit content and appreciation of some of the features of the Constitution, and the scaffolding (supplying the chart framework and the list of problems with the Articles of Confederation) seems appropriate.

Another useful activity that promotes understanding of the same set of content calls for students to discuss what problems would result if states did not accept Article 4 of the Constitution that requires them to accept the acts, records, and laws of other states and to grant visiting citizens the same rights as the citizens of their own states. Some of the "what-if?" questions suggested in the manual seem farfetched or focused on side issues, but this one should deepen understanding of our government and of ways that the Constitution is an improvement over the Articles of Confederation. Another good discussion

question suggested later is "What if no Amendment procedure had been built into the Constitution?"

A creative writing activity calls for students to imagine that they were among the Native Americans forced to endure the Trail of Tears journey and to write diaries describing their experiences, attitudes, and future expectations. This is a good topic around which to build a creative writing assignment, and it should be useful not only for deepening understanding of the events involved but also for helping students to develop sympathetic and positive attitudes toward Native Americans.

3a. Are certain activities or assignments missing that would have added substantially to the value of the curriculum?

There are many places where the curriculum would have benefited from structured discussions, chart construction, or other activities that would encourage students to organize information or compare and contrast examples. The same is true of small-group and cooperative activities, field trips and visits by resource people, simulations, extended writing, citizen action projects, and "concluding" activities calling for students to integrate and communicate what they had learned.

In addition, there should have been more teaching (not just exercising) of key research and information organization and communication skills, as well as critical thinking and decision-making skills (but within the context of application, not as isolated practice). Many activities that were good as far as they went would have benefited from additional components calling for students to attempt to generalize from particular cases or to relate the content to current events or policy issues. Similarly, many activities that were confined to discussion or participation in some experience would have benefited from a

follow-up segment calling for students to reflect on the experience and communicate their thinking orally or in writing.

3b. Are certain activities or assignments sound in conception but flawed in design (e.g., vague or confusing instructions, invalid assumptions about students' prior knowledge, infeasibility, etc.)?

There were many such activities in this curriculum, often reflective of generic problems. For example, the generic idea of beginning lessons with an activity designed to motivate student curiosity or interest in the content is a good one, but many of the activities suggested as motivation devices do not seem likely to serve that function, and many of the others seem unduly costly in time or trouble, irrelevant to the key ideas developed in the lesson, or in other ways lacking in appropriateness or cost effectiveness. Similarly, the generic idea of placing questions under pictures in order to stimulate student study and interpretation of the pictures is a good one, but a great many of the caption questions included in this curriculum focus on trivial or irrelevant details. Also, although it is important to develop skills as well as knowledge, it would seem to be more effective to do so by teaching those skills as strategies and incorporating them in places where they can be used naturally as tools for applying the knowledge content, rather than by providing mostly isolated skills practice via skills exercises inserted rather arbitrarily into units.

Many of the workbook exercises are flawed by ambiguities, either in the conceptual distinctions on which they are based or in the examples or visual representations of these concepts. One workbook page calls for students to circle "home" or "school" depending on where the events depicted in pictures would take place. However, one of the drawings shows a child reading a book at what is supposed to be a school desk but could just as easily be a table at home. Furthermore, even if the picture had not been ambiguous, this item would

have the effect of communicating the idea that reading is something done at school but not at home, an idea that is not only incorrect but contrary to notions about motivation to learn that the school should be promoting.

Another activity suggestion calls for making a bulletin board entitled "foods we eat," subdivided into long ago and today. This is an artificially forced discrimination because almost all foods eaten long ago are also eaten today. Presumably students would classify certain foods as "long ago" because they appear in pictures of the first Thanksgiving or other depictions of early colonial life. Still, neither the activity itself nor the conceptual discrimination on which it is based is worth pursuing, unless perhaps it were tied into some explanation of why our eating habits have evolved as they have (nothing is said about this in the manual).

Questions and activities in the unit on clothing are built around the notion that people wear uniforms either for identification or for protection. This is another one of those forced dichotomies, and it leaves out other possible reasons, such as functional efficiency. At many places in the curriculum, one gets the feeling that certain activities are included (and in a few cases, that the content itself is treated in certain ways) because the authors saw opportunities to introduce such dichotomies and use them as the basis for questioning students.

This root problem is often compounded by ambiguities in the illustrations. For example, one worksheet calls for students to distinguish producers of goods from service workers. However, a police woman is given as an example of a service worker but is shown writing a parking ticket, a man picking apples is classified as a service worker when he could just as well have been the owner of the farm and classified as a producer of goods, and a carpenter at a

workbench is intended as an example of a producer of goods when he could just as well be doing repairs.

The "thinking" activities are also frequently plagued by conceptual ambiguities, ill-considered examples, or other implementation problems. For example, a second-grade activity intended as a simulation of the election process calls for having students list things that they think their community needs, use a ballot box to vote for the one item that they think the community needs most, and then prepare a bar graph to illustrate the results. The basic idea here was a good one but the vehicle chosen for accomplishing it was not optimal. Elections typically call for choosing between candidates or voting for or against propositions, not selecting one from a list of possible community improvements. Also, it would have been more natural to tally the results of the balloting as they were read off, rather than to construct a bar graph later.

A lesson on community leaders calls for initiating discussion by asking "What if there was no one in charge of running our community?" The general idea of developing appreciation for and knowledge of the functions of community leaders is a good one, but this particular question seems poorly suited to that goal. Answers are likely to range all over the lot and to focus on the chaos that would occur in the absence of leadership rather than on the functions and activities of community leaders. Many of the "what-if" questions suffer from similar problems.

A lesson on the federal government calls for having students imagine that they would interview the President, brainstorm good interview questions, and then develop a list of questions to ask. Here again, developing appreciation for and knowledge about the President is worthwhile, but this activity is not an ideal vehicle for doing so. The unit does not give students much information about the President that they could use to develop questions, and

it doesn't say much to the teacher about how to structure this activity or about criteria for good questions. Also, the whole activity is a fantasy simulation that cannot be played out and thus will be left hanging without closure (the students will develop lists of questions to ask, but will not get to ask them). This activity appears to have been inserted due to a desire to find a place in the curriculum to include the skill of interviewing rather than because it was a natural and appropriate way to develop understanding of the content of the lesson.

A fifth-grade lesson on the English colonies calls for having students demonstrate their understanding of the joint stock company by making a diagram of its structure showing relationships and flow among the company, stocks, stockholders, and profits. Besides being something of a distraction from the main ideas in the unit, this activity seems ill-considered because the operations of a joint stock company, although relatively easy to explain verbally, are difficult to depict unambiguously in a diagram. Once again, it appears that this activity exists because the curriculum developers felt the need to include a "making a diagram" exercise somewhere, rather than because it is a natural and appropriate way to develop understanding of lesson content. A later activity that appears questionable for similar reasons calls for students to construct battle maps illustrating strategy and key events in an important Revolutionary War battle.

Another lesson calls for leading the students through a charting activity comparing Jamestown and Plymouth by questioning them about why the colonists sailed to America, why they selected the site, what laws they established, what their early activities were, what their experiences were with Native Americans, the problems they faced, and the reasons for eventual success. Such charting activities are useful in helping students to organize and remember information.

and more of them should have been included in this curriculum. Ironically, however, the value of such charting is relatively limited in this particular example. Charting is most useful when things being compared are identical on some dimensions but different on others, so that discussion can focus on why the differences occurred (e.g., Indian long houses vs. mud houses vs. tepees) or on crucial differences that make one thing an improvement over another (e.g., the Articles of Confederation vs. the Constitution). Here, however, the focus would be on differences between two colonies that were mostly unique rather than representative of larger classes of differences. The exercise would help students learn about the variety in reasons for and experiences at early colonies, but the charting aspects would amount to little more than a convenient way to display facts; it would not be a tool for developing generalizations or principles.

A later activity calls for students to discuss and attempt to reach consensus on which amendments to the Constitution are the most important ones today. This seems ill-conceived, given that most amendments are important and comparing them is an apples vs. oranges proposition. Activities that ensure that students understand what each amendment provides for and why it is needed would be preferable to this activity, which appears to have resulted from attempts to find places where critical thinking/evaluation questions could be inserted.

3c. Are certain activities or assignments fundamentally unsound in conception (e.g., lack relevance, pointless busy work)?

Many of the workbook activities are little more than busy work: word searches, cutting and pasting, coloring, connecting dots, etc. Many others are artificial activities included in order to provide skills practice (often on skills that are of dubious value in the first place): alphabetizing the state

capitals, recognizing states from outlines of their shapes, retrieving miscellaneous and undiscussed information from time lines, tracing maps, graphing miscellaneous and undiscussed factual data, finding the geographical coordinates for sites of Revolutionary War battles, listing the items earmarked for taxing in each of the separate Parliamentary acts that preceded the American Revolution, finding information about state symbols (flags, flowers, etc.), and so on.

Occasionally, activities not only lack a sound conceptual basis in the first place but contain representational and directional ambiguities as well. One practice master calls for students to color things that are alike blue but color things that are different red. In one picture, one girl is depicted as white and the other as black, so that the girls (presumably just their faces and hands) should be colored red. Meanwhile, the two boys in the other picture have similar faces and are both depicted as white, so that they are considered alike and the parts of their bodies that are not covered with clothing (these differ in the two pictures) should be colored blue.

Furthermore, the two girls are wearing band uniforms that presumably are the same and thus should be colored blue, but one cannot tell this because one girl is holding a large instrument that covers up her uniform and makes it impossible to tell whether it is the same as the uniform worn by the other girl. Just some of the ambiguities presented by this activity are the following. If the students are to attend to racial cues and consider the two girls "different" on that basis, why would they then be instructed to color their hands and faces red? If everyone is special (according to the lesson), why should the two boys be considered "alike" and colored blue (nothing is said about identical twins in the lesson). This is an example, of which there are many other less extreme ones in this curriculum, of how certain types of workbook

exercises originally intended as means toward ends have evolved to become ends in themselves.

A later practice master calls for students to cut out pictures and paste them in the proper columns depending on whether they depict families shown working or playing. The cutting and pasting is completely unnecessary here (students could have circled the correct word or written in "work" or "play" under the pictures). Furthermore, the activity's conceptual basis (distinguishing work from play) contradicts the attempt in the lesson to develop the idea that working together can be fun.

4. To what extent are assignments and activities linked to understanding and application of the content being taught?

   4a. Are these linkages to be made explicit to students to encourage them to engage in the activity strategically (i.e., with metacognitive awareness of goals and strategies)? Are they framed with teacher or student questions that will promote development?

   4b. Where appropriate, do they elicit, challenge, and correct misconceptions?

   4c. Do students have adequate knowledge and skill to complete the activities and assignments?

Activities and assignments are usually linked in at least a general way to the content being taught, but only a minority of them could be described as furthering student understanding of or ability to apply key ideas. Most of the workbook and practice master activities simply reinforce memory for definitions, conceptual distinctions (often forced), and facts. Many of the "thinking" activities do promote <u>understanding</u> of the content taught, although they usually do not include opportunities to <u>apply</u> the content to life outside of school, current events, or citizen decision making. Given that the content is focused so heavily on facts rather than concepts or generalizations, there are relatively few opportunities for applications in the first place.

Misconceptions are addressed on rare occasions in the text, but activities are not used as vehicles for eliciting, challenging, and correcting such misconceptions.

Students usually would have sufficient content knowledge to enable them to complete activities meaningfully, although occasionally activities imply knowledge that has not yet been taught or is never developed sufficiently in the text. Problems of unjustified assumptions about student readiness for activities occur not so much with content knowledge as with skills knowledge: The success of many activities would depend on the degree to which the teacher provided appropriate initial structuring and followed up with any needed scaffolding in the form of elaborated directions, skills instruction, or assistance in obtaining and using resources. Typically, the manual says little or nothing to the teacher about the need for such structuring and scaffolding or about how to provide it.

5. When activities or assignments involve integration with other subject areas, what advantages and disadvantages does such integration entail?

Most of the integration is with language arts, and many of the suggested tie-ins are appropriate. These include both the use of poetry and fiction as resource material and the incorporation of various language arts skills into activities and assignments. However, many of the language arts tie-ins are counterproductive, amounting at times to an invasion of the social education curriculum by the language arts curriculum. Many activities are essentially language arts activities that have little or no social education value (alphabetizing, pluralizing, finding the main idea in a paragraph, using the dictionary, matching synonyms, etc.), and do not belong in the social studies curriculum at all. Many other activities, although relevant to the lesson topic and useful to some extent as vehicles for pursuing social education goals, are

distorted or unnecessarily convoluted because of the authors' attempts to insert particular language arts skills into the social studies curriculum. Thus, there are writing exercises in which at least as much emphasis is put on the formal aspects of the product (one main idea per paragraph, etc.) as on the social education content, and there are many odd and unnatural activities reflecting forced insertion of language arts skills (write resumes for Washington or Jefferson that make clear why they were qualified for the jobs they held; use pantomime to communicate one of the six reasons for the Constitution as stated in the Preamble and have observers guess which reason is being demonstrated).

Tie-ins with other subject areas are much less frequent than with language arts, but also are frequently questionable or clearly counterproductive as vehicles for promoting progress toward social education goals. There is much unnecessary counting and sequencing, for example, apparently inserted as a way to incorporate mathematics skills. One activity calling for reading statements about various Constitutional amendments and identifying the amendments by number is unnecessarily complicated by further directions calling for the amendment numbers to be put into the proper squares of a three-by-three matrix which, if filled out correctly, will yield the same "magic number" as the sum for each row and column. As if this were not convoluted enough, the instructions call for the student to "put the number of the amendment in the box with the same letter as the sentence that describes it."

In general, the separation of the skills curriculum from the knowledge curriculum and the consistent attempt to inject language arts and other skills into the activities were major detractors from the coherence of this curriculum. The problem is not just poor implementation of a fundamentally sound idea; its root lies in the very notion of using the social studies curriculum

as a place to locate skills-practice exercises. This is true regardless of whether the skills in question are usually associated with social studies or with some other school subject. This problem would not truly be rectified unless the curriculum developers were to abandon the present approach completely and instead design or select activities because, both individually and as a set, they constituted the method of choice for accomplishing the social education goals that are supposed to provide the rationale for the curriculum in the first place. This would eliminate all of the invasive and distortive features of the current curriculum, as well as the many unnecessary calls for art work or formulaic oral or written work. The resulting curriculum would still include heavy use of literature and the arts as input and frequent incorporation of skills developed in language arts and the other school subjects, but in ways that were natural and well suited to the development of student understanding and ability to apply social education content.

6. To what extent do activities and assignments call for students to write beyond the level of a single phrase or sentence? To what extent do the chosen forms engage students in higher order thinking?

The primary grades call for very little writing of any kind, and practically none beyond the level of a single phrase or sentence. The later grades do include a few essay questions and occasional calls for creative, simulation-based writing (as in assignments calling for students to pretend that they are participants in historical events or residents living in another time or place and to keep a diary or correspond with friends). There also are occasional biography or research assignments.

On the whole, however, there should be more emphasis than there is on student writing as a way to integrate and communicate learning. Furthermore, in addition to the currently emphasized writing assignments focused on facts or personal reactions, there should be more that call for students to chart

information, compare and contrast examples, provide integrative summaries or explanations, articulate and defend predictions or policy positions, or in other ways to think critically about or apply what they are learning.

G. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

1. Do the recommended evaluation procedures constitute an ongoing attempt to determine what students are coming to know and to provide for diagnosis and remediation?

The teacher's manual does not make recommendations (and in fact is completely silent) about assessment and evaluation issues, but it does provide content and skills tests for each unit as well as review questions at the ends of chapters and units that could be used as essay questions. The value of these tests and questions as vehicles for monitoring student learning and diagnosing and suggesting remediation where problems exist is limited by the fact that the vast majority of the questions call only for recognition or retrieval of definitions or facts.

2. What do evaluation items suggest constitutes mastery? To what extent do evaluation items call for application vs. recall?

   2a. To what extent are multiple approaches used to assess genuine understanding?

   2b. Are there attempts to assess accomplishment of attitudinal or dispositional goals?

   2c. Are there attempts to assess metacognitive goals?

   2d. Where relevant, is conceptual change assessed?

   2e. Are students encouraged to engage in assessment of their own understanding/skill?

Because the items are focused so heavily on memory for facts and definitions, the essential answer to all of these questions is "not at all" or "no." In fact, the test items are often less demanding than related items that appear on the practice masters or worksheets to be used in teaching the unit

(requiring only recognition rather than retrieval of factual information, for example). Even the essay questions included at the higher grade levels typically only call for retrieval of information given in the text, not for application or for development and defense of some personal response to it.

The format of the tests is such as to give both teachers and students the impression that good learning is occurring if the students can retain factual information at least long enough to recognize or retrieve it on the tests, and the unnecessarily low difficulty levels of the tests suggest a desire to reassure everyone concerned that all is well.

3. What are some particularly good assessment items, and what makes them good?

The chapter check-up questions mostly focus on facts, and often relatively trivial facts at that. However, some of them focus on important ideas (What is the purpose of a political party?), and a few even call for application of key ideas (Under what circumstances might a car be a <u>want</u> for one person but a <u>need</u> for another person?). Similarly, although many of the "applying knowledge" activities suggested at the ends of chapters are time consuming artistic or construction projects of limited social education value, some of them would be useful not only as social education activities but as bases for assessment and evaluation of student learning (make a map of your bedroom, pretend that you were a member of one of the tribes studied and write a story about your life).

Most of the best evaluation items, however, appear in the essay question portions of the content tests supplied with each chapter. Even these questions focus mostly on facts, but typically one or two of them will call for showing understanding or ability to apply key ideas, as in the following examples: Why are the lines of latitude and longitude important? What effect did the

horse have on the Plains Indians? How would our lives be different today if Spain rather than England had colonized North America?

4. What are some flaws that limit the usefulness of certain assessment items (e.g., more than one answer is correct; extended production form but still asking for factual recall, etc.).

The basic flaw with the entire evaluation component of this curriculum is that it focuses on memory for miscellaneous facts rather than on key ideas, applications, or even explanations for the most important facts. Thus, the tests are inherently limited as evaluation devices. Within this limitation, however, they are well constructed, being generally free of ambiguous wording, confusing constructions, multiple correct answers, and related flaws (although a few of the items are based on the same kinds of forced dichotomies mentioned in F3b above).

There are vocabulary/content tests and skills tests. Vocabulary tests appear in the primary grades and feature true/false, matching, and fill-in-the-blank items. Content tests appear thereafter and feature 10-20 multiple choice items followed by 3-5 essay questions. The multiple choice items are well constructed in that the questions are clear and only one of the answer choices is correct, but even when taken together they provide only limited information about student understanding of chapter content. This is not only because the items tend to focus on memory for miscellaneous facts, but also because the combination of the facts selected for focus and the answer choices offered to students makes most items very easy to answer (often from general knowledge without even having read the chapter). Similarly, although there usually are one or two good essay questions included on a given test, most of the essay questions only require students to demonstrate memory for content

presented in the chapter (i.e., without transforming it, applying it, or in some other way showing understanding of it).

The skills tests are self-contained exercises comparable to those found on standardized achievement tests. They present a paragraph of content, a chart, a graph, a table, or some other form of input and then require students to answer questions about it. Although usually well constructed from the standpoint of item clarity, freedom from ambiguity, and similar criteria, these skills tests suffer from two limitations that limit the skills component of this curriculum as a whole: (1) There is little or no connection between the content of the skills tests and the content of the unit, so that the skills tests call for students to show skill mastery on isolated skills exercises rather than to use the skills to apply the content taught in the unit; and (2) many of the skills included in these tests are language arts skills that have little or no relevance to the accomplishment of social education goals (e.g., match pictures of food items whose names begin with the same letter). Like the skills component as a whole, the skills tests included with this curriculum probably help prepare students to do well on standardized tests of basic skills, but do not support (and in fact, probably work against) the enactment of a coherent social education program.

H. DIRECTIONS TO THE TEACHER

1. Do suggestions to the teacher flow from a coherent and manageable model of teaching and learning the subject matter? If so, to what extent does the model foster higher order thinking?

There are essentially no general instructions to the teacher, other than that the units can be taught in any order, the social studies skills material that begins each text can be taught as a separate unit or integrated with later content units, and the material can be adapted in any way that seems necessary

in order to fit state guidelines or perceived local needs. For the most part, then, the company supplies the teacher with tools (student text, student workbook, activity suggestions, tests, etc.) but leaves it up to the teacher decide which ones to use and how to use them.

There are only two exceptions to this. One is the implied expectation that units will be kept intact even if taught in a different order. The other is the three-step lesson plan that is used throughout the curriculum: (1) brief motivational activity designed to arouse student interest, anticipate lesson content, and (sometimes) tie the lesson to prior student learning; (2) lesson development to be accomplished through a series of questions, both about the content in the text and about the illustrations that accompany it (along the sides, the manual gives these questions and the expected correct answers, but says nothing specifically about how much time to spend on lesson development, likely student misconceptions, or anything else); and (3) reinforcement/evaluation, which begins with re-asking the "directed study question" that opened the lesson in the student text and presumably called attention to key ideas. Also listed under reinforcement/evaluation as part of the three-step plan, but not discussed in terms of how or when to use them, are relevant workbook pages, practice worksheets, and tests. Presumably, everything included along the sides of the manual as part of the basic three-step lesson plan is recommended to the teacher as the basic curriculum, and the suggested activities listed at the bottom of the pages or at the beginnings or ends of the units are optional.

Extrapolating from the brief preview of the three-step lesson plan given in the manual, the authors assume a traditional Madeline Hunter-like lesson model. The motivational activity is designed to arouse interest, anticipate lesson content, and tie the lesson to prior learning. The lesson development activities are designed to call students' attention to and check their under-

standing of key ideas in the lesson content, and the reinforcement/evaluation activities are designed to check for understanding of the main ideas and provide for practice (as opposed to applications). Applications appear only in the optional activities suggested at the bottom of the page and in the chapter or unit review sections that appear after a series of lessons.

Although there is not enough rationale and explanation to describe the implied teaching model here as coherent, it is manageable. In fact, it seems clear that a key consideration in developing this curriculum was making things as convenient as possible for the teacher. The model leaves much to be desired, however, as a vehicle for fostering higher order thinking about the content.

2. To what extent does the curriculum come with an adequate rationale, scope and sequence chart, and introductory section that provide clear and sufficiently detailed information about what the program is designed to accomplish and how it has been designed to do so?

This curriculum is remarkably skimpy when it comes to rationale, scope and sequence charts, and detailed information about the program. The program rationale takes up less than a page and is not even included in some of the manuals. The front matter is mostly hype concerning presumably desirable features of the curriculum rather than detailed rationale and explanation.

Concerning skills, there is not an actual scope and sequence chart but instead a skills index that gives "representative pages" where activities calling for the skill (but usually not lessons teaching the skill) can be found. Concerning knowledge, some (not all) of the manuals contain program content outlines (organized by units within grade levels) and scope and sequence charts (organized by the six general content categories of geography, history, economics, government/citizenship, sociology/anthropology, and humanities). These appear at the back of the book. Both individually and

taken together as a set, these informational components for teachers provide remarkably little information about the intended outcomes, rationale, and features of the program.

3. Does the combination of student text, advice and resources in teacher's manual, and additional materials constitute a total package sufficient to enable teachers to implement a reasonably good program? If not, what else is needed?

The combination provides a useful set of raw tools for teachers rather than a fully designed and explained curriculum. The student text offers a compendium of facts and some very good illustrations, both pictures and maps. The content exposition is too cluttered and it leaves much to be desired concerning clarity and completeness of explanation and depth of treatment of important ideas. The workbook and practice sheets emphasize matching, fill-in-the blank, and similar knowledge recognition and reproduction activities, many of which could be skipped. The activities suggestions in the manual vary considerably in type, scope, and apparent value.

A teacher with good content knowledge and clear goals could use this curriculum as the basis for a good program but would need to focus (and within that, elaborate) the content for the students, help them to approach the content within a context of life applications, stimulate and guide reflective discourse that would feature much more higher order thinking than would be generated by the lesson development questions given in the manual, and then both select from and supplement the supplied activities, assignments, and evaluation devices to place more emphasis on life applications of key ideas. Such structuring and adaptation would have to be imposed on the program; however, teachers who lacked the social studies knowledge and goal orientation needed to do so would have difficulty seeing coherence in the curriculum, understanding its

purposes, or teaching it in ways that took it beyond relatively isolated fact memorization and skills practice.

3a. Do the materials provide the teacher with specific information about students' prior knowledge (or ways to determine prior knowledge) and likely responses to instruction, questions, activities, and assignments? Does the teacher's manual provide guidance about ways to elaborate or follow up on text material and develop understanding?

There are no pretests or other formal mechanisms for assessing students' prior knowledge. One of the claimed purposes for the brief motivational activity that begins each lesson is to link the new material to prior learning, although this does not occur systematically and in any case is not the same as assessing prior knowledge. In general, there is nothing said anywhere about students' existing knowledge or misconceptions concerning new content (not even where it might be expected, such as in the lessons on the President). The questions suggested to the teacher along the sides of the manual are accompanied by expected student answers, but again nothing is said about students' existing conceptions or misconceptions.

The manual provides guidance about elaborating on the text material to develop understanding in the form of the three-step lesson plan. Most questions call for repetition of facts rather than understanding of concepts or principles, but there are some of the latter questions. Furthermore, some of the suggested thinking activities would foster student understanding if properly implemented. Again, the teacher must have the knowledge and goal orientation needed to accomplish teaching for understanding; the manual doesn't emphasize this or provide much guidance about how to do it.

The manual contains occasional background information inserts that provide teachers with additional elaboration of the content that they can convey to students if they wish to do so. It also includes bibliographies suggesting sources that both teachers and students can consult for additional information.

3b. To what extent does the teacher's manual give guidance concerning kinds of sustained teacher-student discourse surrounding assignments and activities?

For the most part, the manual not only gives no guidance about but gives no hint of the importance of content-based discourse. Most of the questions, even the minority that call for explanations rather than just facts or definitions, are designed to get students to reproduce correct answers given in the text itself rather than to articulate and defend a position on a nonobvious issue. Some of the thinking activities call for discussion or debate, but again, without communicating to the teacher the importance of sustained and reflective content-based discourse. Nothing is said to the teacher about using question sequences, probing strategies, and responsive feedback to stimulate discussion, or about how to handle student questions and comments about sensitive subjects.

3c. What guidance is given to teachers regarding how to structure activities and scaffold student progress during work on assignments, and how to provide feedback following completion?

Guidance concerning the basic lesson is confined to provision of suggested questions and appropriate answers. Somewhat more guidance is given concerning the thinking activities, but this tends to focus on the mechanics of setting up debates, introducing outlining tasks, etc., with little or nothing said about scaffolding progress or providing feedback. Although everything in a unit is usually related in one way or another to its theme, there is no sense that the content and activities are all integral parts of a systematic plan for taking students through a designed series of processes to accomplish intended outcomes. Each unit's key ideas tend to be focused upon in the lessons that introduce the unit, but once into the unit there tends to be little or no reference back to these key ideas. Instead of relating to the key ideas, the activities suggested for lessons within units tend to center around making

lists, exercising language arts skills, doing arts and crafts projects related to the content, and so on. Many of the "make and do" activities would be more valuable if they were "analyze and discuss" activities centered around good questions, issues, artifacts, or data displays. There are some good activities calling for synthesis and communication, debate, and so on, but they are relatively few and are not coordinated to move students systematically toward intended outcomes.

Also, some of the expectations concerning teacher knowledge (both of subject matter and of students) seem unrealistic. Brief instructions for suggested activities frequently make vague reference to the need to make sure that students understand the main points about a topic or process, but do not indicate what these main points are or how they should be taught or reviewed.

3d. What kind of guidance is given to the teacher about grading or credit for participation in classroom discourse, work on assignments, or performance on tests? About other evaluation techniques?

No guidance of any kind is given concerning grading or credit for participation in activities or work on assignments.

3e. Are suggested materials accessible to the teacher?

Most suggested materials would be relatively easily accessible to teachers, assuming that they were willing to pay the (usually small) costs involved in purchasing them. Rather than cost or difficulty in obtaining special materials, the problem with most of the activities that call for special materials is the activity itself--many are elaborate construction projects (murals, exhibits, etc.) of dubious instructional value.

4. What content and pedagogical knowledge is required for the teacher to use this curriculum effectively?

To use this curriculum effectively, teachers would need to have both good knowledge of the subject matter covered and a well articulated orientation

toward the nature and purposes of elementary social studies instruction that they could use to make good decisions about how to focus and elaborate the content in the text and how to cull and supplement the suggested activities in order to transform the curriculum from an emphasis on memorizing facts and practicing skills to an emphasis on learning the content within the context of life applications. Given the latter goal, the remarkable paucity of information to the teacher about the program and how it should be taught can be seen as an advantage. That is, this program is easier to adapt for emphasis on conceptual understanding and higher order applications than it would be if the authors had done a better job of socializing teachers into the factual knowledge/values inculcation approach that they offer.

Discussion

Having reviewed the SBG curriculum in considerable detail, I will now close the paper with brief discussion of a few conclusions and implications. The discussion will be restricted to a few major issues, for two reasons. First, conclusions and implications concerning most of the specific features of the curriculum that were singled out for praise or criticism in the critique section either are obvious or were included in the comments made about these curriculum features at the time, so there is no need to repeat them here. Second, pending careful examination and preparation of detailed critiques of other widely used elementary social studies series, I am not yet prepared to compare and contrast the SBG series with any of its competitors. Cursory inspection of these curricula suggests, however, that they are much more alike than different. Ravitch (1987), Tyson-Bernstein (1987), Woodward (1987), and other recent critics cited in the introduction have made the same observation. Consequently, the comments made in this discussion would appear to apply to the

current de facto national curriculum in elementary social studies, and not just to the SBG series as a representative example.

My analysis supports the findings of other critiques concerning generic problems found in textbook series in general (student texts are flashy in appearance but limited in value as learning resources for students, too much breadth is covered in not enough depth or coherence to promote understanding, content explication is cluttered with insertions or illustrations that are not related to key ideas, etc.) and in elementary social studies series in particular (content in the early grades is thin and redundant, skills content is separated from knowledge content rather than integrated with it, etc.). My analysis elaborates on these problems and raises many additional issues as well, especially issues that go beyond analysis of the content of the student texts in order to consider the qualities of the teacher-student discourse, the activities and assignments, and the evaluation system that would result if teachers not only used the student texts but enacted the larger curriculum that would be created by following the question, activity, and evaluation suggestions given in the manuals.

In reflecting on my own critique of the SBG series, the comments made about it by the social education professors and social studies teachers interviewed in a related study (Prawat, Brophy, & McMahon, 1990), and the various concerns raised by the critics cited in the introduction to this paper, I have concluded that most of the important problems that have been identified in SBG and series like it would be eliminated if publishers made three fundamental changes in their approach to curriculum development. None of these changes would be particularly difficult, expensive, or otherwise impractical for publishers to implement. Understandably, however, publishers will hesitate to commit themselves to these or any other proposed changes until they see

corresponding changes in the kinds of market pressures described by Tyson-Bernstein (1987). Thus, not just publishers but state- and district-level curriculum policymakers as well as teachers and others who may serve on local textbook adoption committees will have to become convinced of the need for such changes if the current de facto national curriculum is to evolve in desirable directions.

The first and most fundamental change would be a shift from content coverage objectives (lists of specific topics and skills to be "covered") to more general social education purposes and goals as the fundamental considerations that drive curriculum development. Within this conception of goals-driven curriculum development, everything included in the curriculum--not just the questions and activities included as methods for developing content but even the selected content itself--would be included as parts of a coherent strategy for accomplishing larger curricular goals (expressed in terms of student capacities or dispositions to be developed). Thus, everything in the suggested curriculum, including its content, would be viewed as a means for achieving major social education goals, not as an end in itself.

A noteworthy implication of this principle is that cultural literacy arguments, by themselves, would not be considered sufficient justification for inclusion of any particular content in the curriculum. In a goals-driven curriculum, decisions about content inclusion would be made not on the basis of cultural literacy considerations (i.e., the degree to which the content embodies terms of reference likely to be encountered in reading or conversation), but instead, on the basis of the perceived centrality of the content to basic social education goals (i.e., understanding how the social world works, how and why it got to be that way, and what this implies concerning personal and civic decision making). Thus, the important determinant of whether or not

particular content should be taught would not be the degree to which it is currently familiar to most Americans and is likely to be encountered as a term of reference, but instead, the degree to which it ought to continue to retain this status because it expresses some important truth or principle that has enduring value. Similarly, facts would be included not as ends in themselves but only as examples of generalizations, and would be structured within that context.

A systematic effort to develop curricula as strategies for accomplishing major social education goals would go a long way toward eliminating the current curriculum scope and coherence problems that result in too much breadth covered in not enough depth and with emphasis on memorization rather than on understanding and application. These and related problems (texts featuring parades of disconnected facts rather than coherent networks of information, discourse centered around recitation rather than discussion or dialogue, activities centered around factual memory and isolated skills practice rather than applications) could also be alleviated through two additional changes. These are implied in the notion of goals-driven curriculum development, but they are each important enough to be worth singling out for focused attention.

One such change would be to follow up the goals-driven selection of content for inclusion in the curriculum by explicating that content within networks of connected information structured around powerful ideas. This would make the content easier to learn and retain as meaningfully understood and organized knowledge (because well structured and connected information is inherently easier to learn than parades of facts or other disconnected information). Also, by featuring powerful ideas, it would provide a basis for framing good discussion questions and designing good application activities. It is relatively easy to frame questions and design activities that engage students

in critical thinking, decision making, and related higher order applications when the content has been structured around powerful ideas that have been selected for focus because they promote student progress toward important social education goals, but it is virtually impossible to do so when the content is mostly confined to a parade of facts.

The other major change that would solve many of the identified problems would be to incorporate the treatment of skills within the notion of goals-driven curriculum development. Instead of being treated as ends in themselves and developed through what amounts to a separate skills curriculum with only casual connections to the knowledge curriculum, the emphasis would be on using skills as tools or strategies for applying the knowledge content. Skills would be incorporated (taught if necessary, otherwise merely cued) within activities selected because they offered natural opportunities for applying the knowledge content of social education courses to life outside of school, in ways that were consistent with major social education goals. Thus, to the extent that an activity included interpretation or construction of maps, charts, or graphs, it would be because these tasks were naturally suited to the larger social education purposes that the activity was designed to promote, not because a list of skills coverage specifications dictated that exercises focusing on particular skills be inserted somewhere into the curriculum. Embedded within this recommendation are some assumptions that I will make explicit. First, I assume that if curriculum development is goals driven as described above and skills are included whenever they would be natural and appropriate as tools or strategies for applying the knowledge content, this will have the effect of appropriately resolving most content selection, representation, and sequencing questions in the skills domain. That is, students will learn the skills they need to learn (and will do so in the process of working on whole tasks embedded

within naturally occurring application activities rather than in the form of isolated part-skills practice), and the skills that they do not learn will not be needed anyway because they are not functional to the accomplishment of major social education goals. A further assumption is that even though the skills would be taught as tools or strategies for applying knowledge rather than as ends in themselves, they will be better understood and more accessible for future use in appropriate application situations when learned under naturally occurring strategic application conditions than they would be when learned primarily through isolated part-skills practice.

Development of an elementary social studies series intended for general use is fraught with dilemmas that must be confronted even though they cannot be solved in any completely satisfactory way. In addition to negotiating the market pressures that Tyson-Bernstein (1987) has described, authors need to confront such dilemmas as the following:

> To please everyone, a broad range of topics will need to be included (but to make the text functional as a learning resource, topics should be restricted to those that support progress toward major social education goals, and these should be treated in sufficient depth to promote understanding)
>
> Consistency in style of writing and structure of units helps both teacher and students to concentrate on the content without simultaneously having to adjust to demands for different information-processing strategies or task-response formats (but a given expository style or activity format will not be equally appropriate for use in connection with different kinds of content, and in any case, variety in style and format is desirable for motivational reasons)
>
> A curriculum should address not just knowledge and skills but values and dispositions (but most value and dispositional content is controversial and thus risky for publishers to include in the text and for teachers to include in the enacted curriculum)
>
> To maximize the coherence and application value of the content, authors should structure it around powerful concepts and generalizations and take care not to lose the forest for the trees (but the most vivid and

memorable content tends to be the stories and examples that focus on particulars in some detail)

Content selection and representation should be faithful to the disciplines from which the content is drawn, which includes presenting explanations as constructed theories subject to alternative interpretations rather than as unproblematic facts (but elementary school students do not yet have either the cognitive development or the domain-specific knowledge needed to understand and appreciate many of these complexities, and in any case, they are more likely to be able to understand and remember a concrete, coherent, and relatively simple story than an array of contrasting interpretations).

I sympathize with the plight of the SBG authors faced with these and other difficulties, and I believe that they deserve credit for the many positive features that the series embodies. I also believe, however, that the series could become a much more effective learning resource than it is now if the authors were to shift from content coverage to major social education goals as the primary consideration driving curriculum development.

This fundamental change in approach to curriculum development would embody a great many more specific changes (the major ones identified earlier in this discussion and the many smaller ones mentioned or implied in the earlier critique section). Yet the bulk of the suggested changes (all except those dealing with provision of artifacts or supplementary materials such as children's fiction) could be accommodated without significant changes in the format or length of the curriculum or in the production or delivery system. Curricula developed according to these principles would probably be less similar to one another than the ones being offered currently (because they would differ both in which major social education goals were selected for primary emphasis and in what content was selected as means of accomplishing those goals). What they would have in common, however, is that inspection of their content (not just the exposition in the texts but the suggested questions, activities, and

evaluation methods) would reveal consistent clarity of purpose concerning what students were expected to get out of the curriculum and how they were to apply this to their lives outside of school.

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